

# BMCC goes off book to save students \$1 million

By **ANTONIO SIERRA**  
*East Oregonian*

At a time of rising costs for tuition and fees, it's not often that a college can celebrate what it saved students.

But Blue Mountain Community College did that when it held a small get-together to tout a large number: \$1 million.

That's the figure BMCC officials estimate the college has saved students over the past two years in textbook costs, savings made possible by a long-term effort to convert its course material to open educational resources, or OERs.

BMCC's effort comes at a time when textbook prices are skyrocketing.

According to Vox, textbook prices have risen 1,000 percent since the 1970s and a 2014 report from the Public Interest Research Groups showed that two-thirds of students surveyed had skipped buying or renting course materials because they couldn't afford it.

BMCC is no different. Before getting involved in OERs, Bruce Kauss, the BMCC e-learning coordinator, said it wasn't unusual for a course to require a \$300 textbook.

Kauss said BMCC started introducing OERs into their courses in 2012, but the college really started gearing up its efforts in the past two years.

Using \$98 as the average cost of a textbook and factoring in enrollment and the number of classes that use OERs, BMCC estimates it now saves students at least \$500,000 in textbook costs.

BMCC is able to avoid using traditional textbooks in many of its courses by encouraging instructors to build their curriculum through online resources like CK-12 and OpenStax.

It's a trend that colleges and universities across the country are taking advantage of, and BMCC wants to be a leader in that trend in the state.

John Fields, the BMCC vice president of instruction, said it isn't always easy to get faculty on board with OERs.

A former administrator at Florida State College at Jacksonville, Fields said some faculty members preferred using textbooks because of the additional supplementary material that provided lesson plans and tests.

But Fields said there isn't the same cultural resistance at BMCC.

Many degrees and certificates use OERs in two-thirds or more of their courses.

Velda Arnaud, a business and leadership instructor and the chair of the business administration department, said the retail management certificate could become the first BMCC program to use all OERs by 2021.

Arnaud said she found that students were more engaged if she assigns them hands-on projects derived from OERs rather than a test from a textbook.

Similarly, the BMCC math department is finding OERs beneficial to both faculty and students.

Stan Beach, a math and computer science instructor, remembers the days when math classes would require a textbook that would cost hundreds of dollars.

Since then, the math department has switched to myOpenMath, a free service that offers free open-source math textbooks.

Beach said hundreds of math instructors from across the country contribute to the textbook, and if Beach or any other instructors notice an error in the curriculum, they can amend it without having to hassle with a publisher.

"It's the way math should be," he said.

Among the celebration's attendees were members of the BMCC Associated Student Government, who munched on pizza as Kauss and Arnaud gave a presentation.

Monica Silva of Yakima said student opinion on OERs varies.

"I think it depends on the student," she said. "Some people prefer hard copies to a computer."

But Silva also added that she herself was pretty adaptable and liked the money she was able to save.

Not all classes are ready to adopt OERs. Some degrees, like hospitality and gaming or accounting, don't necessarily have a lot of free educational resources online.

But Kauss said some professors are working directly with textbook publishers to bring down the cost of textbooks.

Kauss said his goal would be to see every class bring their educational material cost to \$40 or lower.

## Pendleton police association, city have new labor deal

PENDLETON — The Pendleton City Council approved a new labor contract that increases pay for members of the Pendleton City Police Association 3 percent a year for three years.

The council on Feb. 19 received a briefing on labor negotiations and contract proposals and voted for the deal during its public meeting Tuesday night.

Andrea Denton, the city's human resources manager, in a memo to the council described the raises as cost of living adjustments consistent with consumer price index trends. The deal also provides 1 percent increases for incentive pay to the school

resource and community service officers, as well as a 1 percent bump for officers who obtain advanced certification from the Oregon Department of Public Safety Standards and Training.

Denton in the memo also told the council the compensation is consistent with the market and provides for a stable workforce with less turnover and promotes good morale.

"A well-equipped, well-trained, and properly compensated police force adds to the quality of life in the City of Pendleton," Denton stated in the memo.

The contact goes into effect July 1 and expires in 2022.

### MELTDOWN



Staff photo by Kathy Aney

An icicle drips as the weather warms Thursday in Pendleton.

## Echo city administrator to retire

By **JADE MCDOWELL**  
*East Oregonian*

Diane Berry is retiring as Echo city administrator.

Berry has run day-to-day operations in the city, population 710, for 39 years. During that time Echo has seen the renovation of historic buildings, new businesses, new park amenities and the growth of annual

events such as the Red 2 Red cross country mountain bike race.

As city administrator, Berry has led consistent efforts to maintain Echo's appearance, with public art initiatives, a Tree City USA designation and an abundance of floral displays that led to the city being a three-time winner of the small cities category of the

national America in Bloom competition.

The new city administrator will inherit several projects currently in the works, including a major upgrade to the wastewater treatment system the city is under pressure from the Department of Environmental Quality to complete.

Echo operates on a system of a paid city admin-

istrator, overseen by an elected mayor and six at-large city councilors.

The city has opened the search for a new administrator and will take applications until March 25. The starting salary listed is \$40,000 to \$65,000 plus PERS, paid vacation and other benefits. For more information see <http://echo-oregon.com/pub/flyer-administrator.pdf>.

## Legislature asks for program cuts despite soaring revenue

By **SARAH ZIMMERMAN**  
*Associated Press*

SALEM — Legislative leaders in Oregon released a conservative budget framework asking for cuts across nearly all state programs, despite projections the state will take in historic levels of revenue.

Co-chairs of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means released their budget plan on Thursday, which is considered the starting point for the final budget package. The proposal calls for an approximate 5 percent reduction across all services except education and health care.

The plan also allocates an additional 1 percent to the state's rainy day fund to prepare for a possible financial downturn in the next couple of years.

State economists indicate that Oregon has been benefitting from historic economic expansion, and that the state is expected to bring in \$20.6 billion by the end of June, \$147 million more than originally expected. But budget leaders are cautious, saying that revenue can go down in the upcoming months. Plus, they add that the revenue increase isn't enough to address a spiraling pension debt and a Medicaid funding gap.

"We want to acknowledge that this is not a perfect budget, there will

be folks who are not happy with this budget," said Rep. Dan Rayfield, D-Corvallis, one of three co-chairs of the Ways and Means Committee. "But our job is to balance the budget within the resources we have."

Notably, the budget proposal doesn't include the \$200 million increase for education requested by Democratic Gov. Kate Brown in her proposed budget unveiled in December. Lawmakers said they were able to scrounge up an extra \$100 million through a tax

on recreational marijuana and are proposing a \$8.87 billion budget for state's K-12 system. The Oregon School Boards Association has said that the school system needs \$9.13 billion to maintain services and to account for increases in pension and other employee benefits.

"We recognize that this budget will still end up with deficits for many of our school districts," said Sen. Elizabeth Steiner Hayward, D-Beaverton, another co-chair of the budgetary committee. "We don't like

it and yet we're constrained to the resources we have available."

Budget leaders also said that a large portion of the state's budget will go toward funding the state's Medicaid program. The state recently passed a \$379 million health-care package, but even that isn't enough to make up for the state's Medicaid funding gap that's ballooned to over \$800 million dollars. Lawmakers say they've received less federal matching funds than in years past, which has made that shortfall worse.

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