



CENTRAL OREGON
community college

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Dear Carol and Chemistry Faculty,

Thank you for taking part in this inaugural year of the Department & Program Review (DPR). The focus of the DPR redesign was to simplify the compilation process, to highlight successes and voice critical needs, and to connect the College plan to a department or program's vision. Your engagement in this process is important, and we applaud the time and effort you spent reflecting on your program and analyzing the work you are doing.

Strengths of your program

We laud your Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) efforts to attract local middle and high schoolers to Chemistry and to invest in activities designed to attract and reduce barriers for underrepresented students. Chemistry was one of the rare groups this year to call out specific diversity and inclusion gaps in its program review. Additionally, Chemistry faculty members employ pedagogies that foster inclusiveness, participate in the science department's DEI group, and seek out opportunities beyond COCC, such as OPIRC, OER development, and School of Ice workshops. It's clear that in Chemistry DEIB means more than just "ticking a box."

We find that chemistry faculty members showed great resourcefulness and resilience during the pandemic and amid the subsequent staffing shortages. That ingenuity is apparent, for example, in how faculty members addressed barriers for working students by developing hybrid opportunities. Post-pandemic, faculty have pursued multiple grant opportunities, brought back organic chemistry, and reestablished department-wide chemical hygiene and safety practices.

We recognize faculty members' transfer and outreach efforts. The Science Coaches program builds partnerships with K-12 schools. Offering courses like SUS 103 foster interdisciplinary collaboration among faculty and connects students to the College's commitment to responsible stewardship of our natural resources. Further, participation in OPIRC has inherent potential for building camaraderie among science students, builds a strong transfer pathway to an Oregon public university, and provides students with career-connected learning events, activities, and networking opportunities.

Challenges of your program

We understand that Chemistry's success over the last five years has not come without challenges. Your report noted hiring as a particular challenge and we acknowledge that this is a common concern raised by several disciplines across campus. However, we are encouraged by the addition of a third full-time Chemistry instructor for this upcoming academic year. We hope that this hiring process has provided some insight on how to best address and overcome the recruitment and retention challenges you note in your report and we encourage you

to continue to work with your dean on how to best implement a hiring strategy that sustainably serves your students' needs.

Your report also describes challenges with delivering courses and programming at our branch campuses. Partnering with Madras High School seems like an excellent way to support students in that part of COCC's service district while the Madras campus science labs are being finished. We also encourage you to work with both your dean and the director of assessment and curriculum to redesign courses and/or develop new courses that might address some of the physical and space limitations described in your report. While many of our students can benefit from traditional, lab-based learning experiences in Chemistry courses, we are also committed to serving students that may not be able to access those type of courses because of their schedules, working or family commitments, or the space restrictions posed by their campuses (like students at Deer Ridge). Offering courses online or during "nontraditional" times may improve access and learning opportunities for a number of our vulnerable and/or underserved student populations.

Finally, we are optimistic that COCC's focused work on Guided Pathways will align with your discipline's desire to help students "rediscover chemistry." These interdisciplinary Pathways are designed to help students more clearly connect learning in the classroom with their personal academic and professional goals. Chemistry seems like a discipline well-poised to benefit from this more proactive and engaged way of meeting our students where they are at. We encourage you to continue to participate in Guided Pathways development work as it continues next year; this work has the most potential to connect to your goal of helping students rediscover your important and highly-relevant discipline.

Goals and needed resources

Your report provided three goals for the next five years, and we have the following responses and suggestions:

Goal 1: Continued development of diversity among our Chemistry students

We encourage you to engage with the Center for Advancing Faculty Excellence as it develops in its mission and offers ongoing professional development opportunities for faculty. Let them know of your particular needs regarding developing support for students from underrepresented populations. Keep track of the work that will develop as a part of Guided Pathways, as well, which has a strong focus on connecting students with opportunities in the fields that they are studying and exploring. Your help in designing these opportunities can assist in making them meaningful.

Goal 2: Continued work to stabilize staffing, so we have highly-qualified and professional faculty to move our program forward and serve as models for our students

Addressing issues related to negotiations, tenure, and evaluation processes (ARAs) remains critical to ensuring a stable and supportive environment for our faculty. The administrative tasks for faculty and chairs are currently under review in various venues, and while balancing these tasks with the college's operational needs is challenging, it will undoubtedly be an ongoing conversation. Your commitment to maintaining open dialogue on this front is vital for our progress and well-being as an academic community.

Goal 3: Improved visibility to the community, aiding recruitment and access to people from across the College district

Improving your visibility in the community is another significant goal. Participation in programs like College Now not only boosts your full-time equivalent (FTE) but also strengthens community relationships and offers new faculty valuable opportunities to engage with local colleagues. In this vein, Marketing and Public Relations has hired a professional videographer/photographer to highlight the exciting activities happening in our classrooms during the 2024-2025 academic year. Please inform Aimee Metcalf of any events or initiatives that could attract prospective students. Additionally, discussing with your chair how funds might be allocated to support student field experiences or other opportunities can further enhance our community engagement and educational impact.

Furthermore, we encourage more robust engagement with the Oregon Public Interest Research Group (OPIRC). They offer funding to enhance our social media presence and support bi-monthly online attendance at the Alliance for Diversity in Science and Engineering meetings, which focus on future career opportunities. Coordination with the Science Club and Engineering faculty to send students to the University of Oregon's Internfest, as well as participation in the annual UO Undergraduate Research Symposium, can significantly enrich our students' academic experiences.

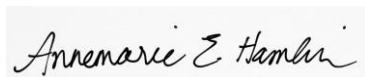
Goal 4: Support systems that allow for continued excellence in physical-resource availability to assist in student learning.

Continued support for maintaining our physical resources, such as the Madras High School and Madras expansion labs, is essential. Lynn Norbury is identifying deferred maintenance needs, ensuring that funds are appropriately allocated to support these facilities, rather than being diverted to the general fund. It is crucial that the administration remains attentive to the needs of our STEM ecosystem to maintain and enhance our educational infrastructure and your help identifying those needs is invaluable.

Thank you for your ongoing dedication to student readiness. Together, we can build on our achievements, address the challenges ahead, and meet the evolving needs of our students.

If you have any questions or need further clarification, please reach out. We look forward to working collaboratively to enhance the quality and impact of the Chemistry program.

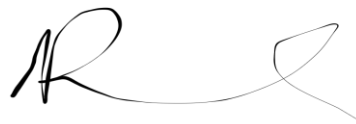
Sincerely yours,



Annemarie E. Hamlin
Vice President of Academic Affairs



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