

Oregon Telecommunications Coordinating Council
Minutes
November 30, 2006

Attendees:

Council Members: John Irwin, Pam Berrian, Agnes Box, Cathy Britain, Faye Stewart, Rob Myers, Ed Parker, Curt Pederson, Brant Wolf, Michael Weidman, Paul Zastrow, Onno Husing, Doug Cooley and Kim Hoffman.

Staff: Chris Tamarin of the Oregon Economic and Community Development Department and Eric Schmidt of Association of Oregon Counties

Others: John Sneed of Portland Community College, Andrea Fogue of the League of Oregon Cities, and Mike Zanon of Oregon Wireless Interoperable Network.

Videoconference sites included Klamath Falls, Medford, Eugene, and Gleneden Beach.

Old Business:

Action Item

It was moved by Paul Zastrow that the October 18, 2006 minutes be approved as distributed. Curt Pederson seconded the motion. The Council approved the minutes.

Presentation:

John Irwin welcomed John Sneed, Director of Distance Education at Portland Community College to provide a briefing on the final report of "*A statewide planning effort to identify and disseminate promising practices to support expansion of healthcare education opportunities in Oregon through distance education.*" The US Department of Commerce Public Telecommunications Facilities Program funded a one-year planning grant called the Allied Healthcare for Oregon: Seeking Solutions through Technology (AHOSST), the grant funded a joint project of the Community College Healthcare Action Plan (CCHAP) and Portland Community College (PCC) to identify and promote promising practices supporting the expansion of healthcare education opportunities in Oregon through distance learning.

The final report explains that Oregonians interested in preparing for health careers, particularly those in rural areas, face educational program access problems. It is difficult for people interested in healthcare careers and training to find the course work they need in their own communities.

The story is most compelling when it is told in the experiences of actual students. Often the programs they need are not offered by distance education; the technology may not support distributed learning; and on-line student services are limited. Not surprisingly, the greatest demand for health care workers is in rural areas. Moving students to urban

areas where programs exist has the negative impact of encouraging people to leave their communities.

This is a critical issue because Oregon does not have sufficient capacity to train workers in-state to meet the demand for healthcare workers, and this demand will continue to grow in future years. Approximately 8,000 new healthcare jobs are expected in the next 10 years in rural areas. Currently, community colleges train over 50% of the state's nurses and approximately 75% of the state's allied healthcare workforce. Seventeen healthcare occupations have been identified with certain or likely shortages of trained workers in the years 2005-2014. Oregon's community colleges are not able to train enough workers even though existing healthcare occupational training programs are fully enrolled. Programs are currently concentrated in the Portland area and an increased utilization of distance learning programs is needed to improve availability throughout the state

It is an AHOSST finding that sharing programs and services through a well planned, coordinated, and state supported effort using distance learning is the best way to create a scalable, sustainable, and student centered health occupations education system in Oregon.

The report concludes that while many of the elements necessary for addressing the shortage of healthcare education in the state are emerging from a new collaborative spirit among the education and health care communities, long term, permanent solutions are not possible without doing some things differently. The recommendations are considered to be the essential elements for a high quality distance education solution for community colleges that is sustainable, focused on student and workforce needs. As such, they are intended to guide discussions about future grants and sustainable funding.

The report makes the following recommendations:

- *Coordination*: Create centralized leadership to provide statewide coordination of healthcare occupations education via distributed learning;
- *Technology*: Fund technology infrastructure development, develop and promote technology standards for access, connectivity and use, and provide faculty support to enable Oregonians to participate in distributed, technology-assisted healthcare occupations education no matter where they reside;
- *Agreements*: Develop and adopt agreements outlining modes of delivery, curriculum, student services, cost sharing, and other institutional responsibilities that support and promote statewide distribution of health occupations education. Create Host/Provider partnerships between colleges;
- *Student Services*: Develop and deliver student services that meet the unique needs of healthcare occupations students participating in distance-delivered instructional models. Expand services statewide to provide resources to assist student services infrastructure development.

John noted that progress in the state is being made through ad hoc projects with the support of Department of Labor Grants (DOLETA), the Community College Health

Action Plan (CCHAP), the Oregon Consortium for Nursing Education (OCNE), and the Oregon Healthcare Workforce Institute and the Simulation Alliance (SIM). John reported that sixteen of the seventeen community colleges now offer distance-learning options.

Progress in the state is being hampered, however, by the lack of a statewide technical and delivery infrastructure, planning, institutional agreements, programming-capacity valve, student support systems, and secure funding.

Next steps include

- Presentations of AHOSST recommendations at all community college constituent groups
- Discussion of AHOSST recommendations and funding implications at CCWD and OCCA
- Discussion with other statewide groups including the Governor's Healthcare Workforce Initiative, the SIM Board, and AHECs.
- Seeking additional grants to address the issue

John thinks that this issue needs a champion in Oregon.

Curt Pederson expressed his long standing frustration that the seventeen Oregon community colleges have a history of acting separately as the independent institutions they are, and have missed opportunities to benefit from mutual collaboration and coordination. The problems identified in this report are not new.

Agnes Box noted that institutions in the Oregon University System have effectively worked to coordinate their efforts and network infrastructure. Community colleges could also benefit from that approach. Agnes recognizes, however, that the mission of the community colleges is different, but she hopes some progress can be made.

John Sneed responded that he agrees that Oregon's community colleges need to behave and operate more like a system, though clearly they are not a system and do not report to any centralized authority.

Cathy Britain observed that there are difficulties in supporting videoconferencing, particularly multi-point videoconferences. She added that ORTCC is promoting a legislative resolution promoting cooperation between the healthcare provider and education communities. Cathy thinks that the 2007 legislature will be very sensitive to technology issues. Cathy offered to forward the report to the Joint Legislative Committee on Information Management and Technology (JLCIMT).

Onno Husing asked about where other states are on this issue. John Sneed responded that there are several case studies from other states included in the report. Onno suggested that success stories in other states are useful tools to promote and support proposals for Oregon.

John added that a recurring theme he has seen this year on a number of fronts is interoperability and related to that, governance. He recommended that any proposals to the 2007 legislature recognize and incorporate those concepts. Don't come in with a blank sheet of paper – have a proposed solution to offer.

Agnes Box observed that education issues and healthcare issues are a priority for the Governor's office, and there should be interest in this report and its proposals. Onno Husing agreed.

John Sneed responded that he welcomes any guidance on how to take this to the next level. He added that he believes that Oregon Healthcare Workforce Institute and CHAPP should be involved.

John Irwin thanked John Sneed for his work on this project.

The complete report is posted on the ORTCC website Reports page <http://www.ortcc.org/report.html>.

Reports:

Telehealth Committee

Kim Hoffman reported that the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) recently voted to establish a pilot program that would help public and non-public healthcare providers build broadband networks that will leverage more money from the universal service fund (USF) program's under-utilized rural-healthcare subsidy. The pilot program healthcare subsidy may be used to underwrite as much as 85 percent of the costs of deploying networks that would connect healthcare providers to each other as well as to provide links to Internet2. The September 26, 2006 Federal Communications Commission News Release, "FCC ADOPTS PILOT PROGRAM UNDER RURAL HEALTH CARE MECHANISM," may be found at the following URL: http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DOC-267605A1.pdf. The Telehealth Alliance of Oregon (TAO) <http://www.ortelehealth.org> is working to organize a consortium to explore this opportunity. Kim reported that there was a meeting in Portland on November 17th to discuss the FCC funding opportunity with about seventy attendees including telecom industry representatives from LS Networks, Charter Communications, Qwest, Western Independent Networks, and Douglas FastNet. John Irwin noted that State Representative Richardson was also in attendance via videoconference from Medford. Kim was disappointed that there wasn't more rural hospital representation at the meeting. Cathy noted that three rural Area Health Education Centers were in attendance and the state's large hospital systems were represented. A prospective consultant, E-Copernicus, delivered a presentation on the program and led a discussion about Oregon's prospects and the application process. Kim felt that people viewed the meeting was beneficial. There were not any conclusions, however. Kim thinks that the goal should be to develop a telehealth business plan that could be used to pursue the FCC funding, or failing that, funding from other sources. It is anticipated that some funding will also be required to develop the plan and application.

A steering committee will be established to guide the effort. Kim said that more work needs to be done.

Legislative Committee

Cathy Britain reported that ORTCC's legislative concepts are still with legislative counsel; no draft bills have been produced to date. Cathy noted that the Joint Legislative Committee on Information Management and Technology (JLCIMT) membership is going to change in the 2007 session, which may present new challenges for technology proposals if the committee's knowledge base is lost.

John Irwin reported that he and Ed Parker presented the ORTCC 2006 Report to the JLCIMT in Salem on November 28, 2006. It was the last of eleven presentations made to the committee after a long day. The 2006 ORTCC Report to the JLCIMT is posted on the ORTCC website Reports page <http://www.ortcc.org/report.html>. John noted that there were several clear themes that emerged from the committee meeting including accountability, interoperability, and governance. There was close to a billion dollars in communications and information technology projects discussed. John asked Mike Zanon to share his impressions of the JLCIMT meeting. Mike Zanon commented on the status report on the Oregon Wireless Interoperable Network project to the Committee. Mike said that he tried to communicate the process that the State Interoperability Executive Council has gone through since 2002. He reviewed the make up of the SIEC and the laws that are directing its activity. He noted that the SIEC has made six presentations to the JLCIMT since last November. Mike was pleased with the discussion that took place and the concern expressed about the important issues of governance, increasing community involvement, and how problem issues around cost can be managed. It is an important discussion and the kind of discussion that policy makers need to be having. Mike reported that the Governor has included a commitment of \$308 million for funding of Phase 0 and Phase 1 of the OWIN project in his budget for the 2007-09 biennium. John indicated that he has invited Mike to the January 18, 2007 ORTCC meeting for an update on the project.

Ed Parker reported that he provided an overview of the Internet Forest concept to the JLCIMT. Ed commented that he also noted other recommendations covered in the ORTCC report. He did not receive any questions and felt that the minds of the committee members were fixed on other larger budget issues that were discussed during the day.

John Irwin noted that the Council will need to continue to work to advocate its legislative concepts and commented that they will have little budget impact when compared with other proposals. Cathy Britain added that once the draft bills come out of legislative counsel, ORTCC will need to prepare supporting information to educate legislators on the issues. The 2007 legislative session begins on January 8th.

Association of Oregon Counties Interoperability Task Force

Eric Schmidt reported that the Association of Oregon Counties Interoperability Task Force met during the annual AOC conference in Eugene. There was a broad ranging discussion of issues. One of the needs identified is to provide incentives for local communities to participate. The Task Force is working on an interoperable system inventory at the County level and how these systems will relate to the OWIN project. There is general agreement that as Ben Boswell, a past AOC president, once said, "When you have seen one Oregon County, you've seen one Oregon County." Eric said that it will be an interesting process and the AOC task force will be looking to ORTCC and to the SIEC for assistance in its work. Onno Husing added that Lincoln County has been having its own meetings to discuss interoperability issues and noted that the County's first responders have already developed working cooperative relationships. Onno also added that interoperability is also going to be a priority at the national legislative level.

Oregon Connections Telecommunications Conference

Chris Tamarin reported that the October conference had 130 attendees and that feedback has been very positive. The website at www.oregonconnections.info has been updated post-conference and will remain up through next year. Power Point presentations from the sessions have been posted on the website. Many of the 2006 sponsors have expressed interest in sponsoring again next year. The next conference will be at the Best Western Agate Beach Inn in Newport on October 25-26, 2007.

Open Council Seats

John Irwin recounted that there are several open seats on the council, several of which are for organizations that are no longer active, the South Coast Telecommunications Task Force, the Central Oregon Telecommunications Task Force and possibly the North Coast Telecommunications Consortium. Three seats vacated this year representing the cities, the Eastern Oregon Telecommunications Consortium and the Tribes need to be filled. Andrea Fogue reported that the League of Oregon Cities is preparing a recommendation to the Governor's office by the end of January 2007 for a new city representative. The LOC Board is meeting in January to approve the recommendation.

Fiber South / Regional Fiber Consortia

Faye Stewart reported that the consortia issued a request of information regarding utilization of their fiber facilities and is awaiting replies.

Southern Oregon Telecommunications and Technology Council

John Irwin reported that SOTTC has voted to dissolve its 501(c)6 corporation status as of December 31, 2006. SOTTC will continue to exist, but as an unincorporated organization. John also reported that SOTTC will be issuing grants to Rogue Community College, Southern Oregon University, and the Oregon State University 4H Extension Technology Program.

New Business:

Agnes Box recommended that Oregon Health and Science University's new president, Dr. Joseph Robertson, be invited to meet with the ORTCC. Agnes noted that he is very interested in rural healthcare and healthcare education issues.

Michael Weidman reported that LS Networks has closed its main Oregon network SONET ring.

Pam Berrian reported that the City of Eugene is developing a pilot project for an Internet peering point readiness study, and has budgeted funds for the project to examine the potential for a statewide peering point located in Eugene, possible at the University of Oregon.

Meeting Schedule:

The next Council meeting will be on Thursday, January 18, 2007. ORTCC meeting dates for the rest of 2007 are February 22, March 22, April 26, May 24, June 28, July 26, August 23, September 27, October 24, and November 29 in the Teleconference Room (Basement) of the Public Service Building, 255 Capitol Street NE, in Salem with the exception of the October meeting, which will be held in Newport. Meeting information will be updated and posted on the Council website www.ortcc.org. John Irwin adjourned the meeting at 12:00 Noon.

* * *