



Oregon

Theodore R. Kulongoski, Governor

Oregon Student Assistance Commission

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NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Oregon Student Assistance Commission Receives Grant to help Students Access College

**\$49,500 from the A. Ted and Doris E. Nelson Fund and the
William Swindells, Sr. Memorial Fund of The Oregon Community Foundation**

Eugene, OR – The Oregon Student Assistance Commission (OSAC) is the recipient of a \$49,500 grant from the A. Ted and Doris E. Nelson Fund and the William Swindells, Sr. Memorial Fund of The Oregon Community Foundation for 21 partnership grants to support an ASPIRE site coordinator, for one year, at each of the 21 ASPIRE sites.

ASPIRE (Access to Student assistance Programs In Reach of Everyone) is Oregon's official mentoring program to help students access education and training beyond high school. Students receive information about college options, admission, and financial aid from trained ASPIRE volunteer mentors who work one-on-one with them throughout the year. Beginning with initial funding from The Oregon Community Foundation, four pilot schools were launched in 1998. Today, ASPIRE has expanded to 115 sites across Oregon and annually engages over 1,000 volunteers, and reaches more than 11,000 students from all walks of life, according to Vicki Merkel, OSAC Scholarship and Access Program Director.

The partnership grants will enable the ASPIRE site coordinator at the 21 different sites in Oregon to recruit and train volunteer mentors who will work with high school students to plan for postsecondary education after graduation.

Mentors help students navigate the various postsecondary options, including two- and four-year colleges, technical/vocational schools, and apprenticeship programs. Mentors also help students explore financial aid options including searching and applying for scholarships. Students who participate in ASPIRE receive one-on-one mentoring. Other students at the site may receive information about scholarships and financial assistance at workshops that are open to everyone.

Mentors come from all walks of life and include parents, professionals and business people from local communities, retired educators, and college students that enhance and extend services of high school counselors.

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“The Oregon Community Foundation partnership has been invaluable in helping reach more students statewide with help in planning for postsecondary education and training, especially in remote areas of the state or areas needing this type of service for students,” said Merkel.

ASPIRE is administered by the Oregon Student Assistance Commission, a state agency whose mission is to assist Oregon students and their families in attaining a postsecondary education and to enhance the value, integrity, and diversity of Oregon’s college programs.

The Oregon Community Foundation (OCF) works to improve life in Oregon and promote effective philanthropy. OCF works with individuals, families, businesses and organizations to create charitable funds to support community causes they care about. Through these funds OCF awards more than \$60 million annually in grants and scholarships.

The Foundation makes grants through an application process that involves local citizens in the review and evaluation of requests for funds. Application materials are available through the Foundations Portland office. Individuals or businesses interested in establishing a fund may contact the Portland office at 1221 SW Yamhill, Suite 100, Portland OR 97205, (503) 227-6846.

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