Southwestern Oregon Community College

Southwestern Oregon Community College (formerly SWOCC, now SOCC) in Coos Bay is the oldest community college in Oregon. It was formed in a tax district election in 1961, which included Coos and western Douglas counties. In 1995, Curry County joined the district and classes were offered in temporary facilities in the old Chetco Library and the high school. In 2010, a donation of ten acres enabled Curry County to begin construction of a satellite campus in Brookings, which SOCC plans to open in August 2011. The college also has offices in Gold Beach and Port Orford.

Early classes in North Bend, Coos Bay, and outlying Coos County towns were held in surplus U.S. Navy facilities. Construction of a permanent campus began in 1963. The tax district now encompasses 3,648 square miles, and the college enrolls nearly 14,500 students annually. Its mission is to provide quality education to help students achieve their goals in employment, to encourage life-long learning, and to become good citizens in the modern world.

In cooperation with local businesses, agencies, and area public school districts, high school students are allowed to take courses at SOCC. Most older SOCC students are residents of the area, who combine with college-age people to make up the broad range of the student body. A large adult education program flourishes, offering assistance to students earning General Equivalency Degrees. With the influx of foreign immigrants to the state from the 1970s through the 1990s, English as a Second Language, citizenship classes, and drivers' education classes were expanded. When the area sawmills closed and the fishing industry declined, the college offered free tuition to displaced laborers who wanted to learn new skills and change their occupations. In more recent years, by partnering with other community colleges, SOCC has offered distance learning through telecourses and videoconferencing.

SOCC offers an Associate of Arts Oregon Transfer and Associate of Arts in both Science and Applied Science. Students at the college study nursing, fire science/firefighting, forestry, and, most recently, culinary arts, restaurant, and catering studies. The Oregon Coast Institute of Culinary Arts Building was completed in 2005. The most popular transfer degrees are in accounting, art, biology, computer science, nursing, general science, and theater arts.

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Further Reading:

Southwestern Oregon Community College. http://www.socc.edu/index.shtml.

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