

[Election: “Yes” On COCC Bond](#)

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Voters again have an opportunity to provide much-needed funding to Central Oregon Community College by checking “Yes” on their ballots in next week’s election. By doing so, voters will impose a miniscule tax increase on themselves (roughly \$2 per month for the average homeowner in Deschutes County) while collectively providing a significant boost to the college, which has seen its enrollment numbers swell recently as unemployed workers and recent high-school grads make the best of the economic slowdown by getting additional education under their belts, that’s a base of knowledge that will strengthen our area’s workforce as the recession ebbs, positioning Central Oregon for recovery.

In the meantime, the college is bursting at the seams. If successful, the bond would help alleviate some of the existing overcrowding by adding satellite campuses in both Prineville and Madras. In addition to helping the college meet current demand, the bond measure, which together with state matching dollars would fund about \$53 million worth of new construction at the college, would help position the college and the region for the future by replacing outdated health and technology facilities. Specifically, it would create a new health sciences building in Bend to meet the growing demand for additional class and training in the health care industry, one of the region’s biggest employment sectors. While some voters might question whether it’s prudent to raise taxes at a time when many workers are unemployed and the regional economy is only beginning to show signs of recovery, there are some compelling reasons to act now. The legislature has earmarked more than \$11 million for the project, but only if local voters match that investment by approving the bond. While we don’t agree with bond backers’ argument that the measure is important because it creates some temporary construction jobs – it’s going to take more than just a few publicly funded commercial projects to make a dent in the unemployment rate around here – the college’s needs are real and likely only to increase in future years.

There’s something else to consider here, too, and that’s the community’s longstanding relationship with the college – an institution that was born out of the hard work and generosity of local residents who provided the land and labor upon which the college was founded. They did so because they recognized the value of higher education not only to students but to the community at large, which benefits from a pool of skilled local workers. Now is no time to go back on that commitment. So mark “Yes.” And pat yourself on the back for being a team player. We don’t think you’ll miss that two bucks.

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