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## Senate passes reorganization plan for Oregon universities, community colleges

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**Jayme Fraser, The Oregonian**  
By

Oregon's public universities and colleges could have greater autonomy next year if the House approves a bill passed by the Senate Friday to restructure the governance of higher education.

**Senate Bill 242** would bring community colleges and universities together under a new Higher Education Coordinating Commission of 15 members appointed by the governor. Previously, the schools were treated as a state agency and the legislature managed community colleges separately from universities.

The switch to a commission will free Oregon colleges from "burdensome" laws that require legislative approval for some projects--such as building a new residence hall -- and require the schools to hire their own legal counsel rather than being represented by the Department of Justice like other agencies. The legislature will maintain some oversight since education appropriations will be linked to performance reports submitted every two years and collaboration with the Commission, who will oversee school budgets, said a press release from the senate's majority party office.

"This bill will significantly improve coordination at all levels of post-secondary education, allowing our community colleagues and universities to work more closely together to deliver better services to our students," said Sen. **Rod Monroe**, D-Portland, in the press release.

– **Jayme Fraser**

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