

Rogue Community College bond fails to pass. What now?




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Erik Neumann / JPR

The Rogue Community College campus in Medford on March 1, 2024.

Voters in Josephine and Jackson Counties have rejected a bond to support projects intended to expand RCC career training programs.

The bond would have raised over \$60 million and would have been used to increase capacity in workforce training programs like pre-nursing, welding and manufacturing and improve campus safety and security.

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But nearly three-quarters of ballots in Josephine County were against the bond, and over half voted no in Jackson County.

RCC President Randy Weber said the college has seen a huge increase in students wanting career and technical education, but they no longer have the capacity to meet that need.

"Welding, two falls ago, had about 55 students in it. Now it has about 120, 130 students. It's at capacity. There's increased demand. Transportation, technology, automotive and diesel, they're in similar situations," he said.

He said the college is trying to get students through their programs in order to fill much-needed jobs in the region.

"There are local, regional, and national shortages in the fields of nursing, commercial truck driving, emergency medical services, welding, and manufacturing and other vocational programs the College offers," according to the bond's explanatory statement.

RCC serves over 9,000 students across three campuses in Jackson and Josephine Counties.

The college's board will discuss next steps now that the bond has failed, including how to address the high-priority projects the bond would have covered. Weber said other options might include using reserves or taking on debt.

The bond would also have added an automotive program to the Table Rock campus in White City and added EMT and diesel programs to the Redwood campus in Grants Pass. It would have made building upgrades and accessibility improvements as well.

The money would have been raised through property taxes, and the state would also have provided \$15 million in matching funds.

Weber said he was surprised by the election results, since he heard so much support for the college.

"I think what we heard was not 'no to the college' at this time, but 'no on taxes' at this time," he said. "So we're going to continue to take those messages of support we heard

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