Grants Pass Daily Courier

Wednesday, September 16th, 2026

RCC board approves new policies on immigration, law enforcement

By Chrissy Ewald of the Daily Courier

Rogue Community College's board of education on Monday approved policies about how the college will tell staff and students about federal immigration enforcement and prohibiting employees from assisting certain kinds of federal or out-of-state law enforcement operations, in response to two state laws taking effect on Sept. 30.

Oregon House Bill 4079 requires the boards of public school districts to adopt a policy to provide notifications to staff and students when federal immigration authorities are confirmed to be on school property for immigration enforcement.

Oregon House Bill 4138 prohibits employees of any public body in the state from intentionally assisting federal or out-of-state law enforcement from investigating, apprehending or arresting people based on various categories, including speech or assembly protected under the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution or as part of "an unlawful search or seizure or other surveillance activity" that violates the Fourth Amendment.

The bill also limits when federal immigration officers can wear masks, and requires law enforcement to clearly display identifying information.

The Trump administration has made immigration enforcement a priority, and in 2025 rescinded a federal policy that banned immigration agents from operating in "sensitive areas" like schools, churches and hospitals.

Oregon lawmakers, largely Democrats, have responded by passing laws designed to limit state and local cooperation with federal immigration agents.

RCC board member Indra Nicholas stressed at a meeting last month that RCC didn't make the policies up and is adopting them because it is required by the state.

"We as board members are required — you know, took an oath — to follow state and federal law," she said. "And so it's irrelevant what, really, I think about that, or anybody, but it's something that's required of RCC."

Nicholas said at that meeting the resolution about not assisting federal or out-of-state law enforcement does not give the college the authority to disregard federal law.

She said federal anti-commandeering doctrine means the federal government can't order the state of Oregon to use state employees to administer or enforce federal programs.

"So there is a legitimate distinction between telling an employee, 'You may not use RCC personnel, equipment, facilities or information to voluntarily assist certain federal operations,' and saying, 'You may interfere with federal law enforcement or refuse to comply with a valid federal subpoena, warrant, court order or other federal legal obligation.' This policy does not give RCC employees authority to obstruct federal law enforcement," she said.

None of the other board members publicly shared their views or talked about the policies.

The college's new policy about immigration enforcement says the college president will ensure there is a person designated as responsible for confirming the presence of immigration authorities on property owned and controlled by the college and providing notice of those activities to students and employees.

The new policy on federal or out-of-state law enforcement operations says except as permitted by state or federal law, college employees and agents are prohibited from assisting federal or out-of-state law enforcement if the person knows the operation is meant to identify or hold liable people based on protected categories like race, color, religion, sex, and more, or based on politics, religion or social views or activities.

The same goes for if the operation is meant to identify or hold liable people based on certain activities protected by the state or federal constitution, like free speech.

— — —

Reach reporter Chrissy Ewald at 541-474-3806 or cewald@thedailycourier.com.