

Ted Wheeler

State Treasurer



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Families now investing a record \$1.28 billion for college through tax-saving Oregon '529' plans

Revamped program giving families expanded investment options, more oversight and lower fees

SALEM – More families than ever are saving for higher education and job training through Oregon's tax-saving college investment plans – and their combined account values have reached a record \$1.28 billion.

The new record-level of investments can be traced to both recovering financial markets and also to a surge in new accounts. The numbers also suggest renewed public confidence in the 11-year-old Oregon 529 College Savings Network, which was reformed in 2010 to provide more investment options, a higher level of oversight and lower fees.

“College is getting more expensive every year, and it is important for Oregon families to know that we have a powerful tool to help them start saving now,” said State Treasurer Ted Wheeler, the chairman of the Oregon 529 College Savings Board.

The Oregon 529 College Savings Network gives families several options to save for higher education, while also qualifying for state and federal tax benefits. The accounts can be used to pay for tuition, room and board, and even books at accredited colleges and trade schools both in and outside of Oregon.

Year-end figures for 2010 show that 129,891 accounts are now open through the two plans that make up the Oregon 529 College Savings Network, with 3,570 new accounts opened in the final quarter of the year.

There are two ways that families can invest. They can sign up for their own accounts and guide their own investments in the [Oregon College Savings Plan](#), which is administered by TIAA-CREF Tuition Financing. Or they can invest through an advisor in the [Oregon Plan](#) offered by MFS Investment Management.

The highest concentration of accounts is held by families in and near Portland, Eugene and Bend. Wheeler said Thursday that he wants to explore ways to better explain the value of saving for education in rural counties, and also statewide to lower-income families in which no parent attended college.

In a step toward that goal, the Board unveiled a new partnership with Big Brother Big Sisters Columbia Northwest, a charity that helps connect mentors to 3,000 disadvantaged youths in four Oregon counties.

Through the partnership, Big Brothers Big Sisters will sponsor workshops with the goal of helping kids save money and get on a path toward college, and the Oregon College Savings Plan will provide 25 college savings accounts worth \$1,000 apiece to help children being served by the charity.

“We are thrilled to have a relationship with an organization of this caliber,” Wheeler said. “We are passionate about doing the right thing for our kids, and we would also be delighted to develop strategic partnerships with other organizations to reach out to additional families.”

The Oregon State Treasury protects public assets and saves Oregonians money through its investment, banking, and debt management functions. The office also promotes public outreach and education to help Oregonians learn strategies to save money, invest for college and make smart financial choices.

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