

# UO takes role in new college-preparation efforts | Inside Oregon

A University of Oregon professor is getting to the root of how best to prepare high school students for college.



[David T. Conley](#), a professor of education, is heading a new project that aims to develop a set of standards for the core content required by college-bound high school students. The goal is to equip incoming college students with the academic foundation and skills they'll need to succeed, especially in the areas of math and English. The project will also focus on a set of career-oriented two-year certificate programs.

Conley, who is the founder and chief executive officer of the non-profit [Educational Policy Improvement Center \(EPIC\)](#), will receive partial funding for his project with a \$794,000 grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

The Seattle-based foundation announced in February that it will 15 grants across the country, totaling \$19.5 million, to develop and launch new instructional tools and assessments intended to assure college readiness. Other support for the UO project comes from the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association as part of the Common Core State Standards Initiative.

"Overall, this massive effort is committed to building high-quality standards that are based on research and scientific evidence and aligned with both college and career expectations for students when they graduate from high school," Conley

said.

The UO-affiliated EPIC will use the Gates Foundation funding primarily for a validity study that will explore the relationship between existing college- and career-readiness standards and the content, expectations and practices most used in entry-level college courses. The study will look at courses in both four-year baccalaureate programs and two-year certificate programs that prepare students for career paths.

EPIC researchers will collect data from instructors of entry-level college courses across the country using a specially-designed online tool. Information collected will include instructor self-reports, course syllabi, external reviews of these course outlines and examples of student work drawn from assignments and assessments.

Researchers hope to identify what is critical for success in those courses and how well the College and Career Common Core Standards reflect those critical elements.

To date, 48 states and Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands and District of Columbia have agreed to align their standards with those established by the Council of Chief State School Officers and National Governors Association. Alaska and Texas have not. Awards made by the U.S. Department of Education under the Obama Administration's Race to the Top program likely will go to participating states.