

IFS STATEMENT TO HECC DECEMBER 10, 2015

10 December, 2015

To: Higher Education Coordinating Commission

From: Jeff Dense, President, Interinstitutional Faculty Senate

Chair Bryant, Executive Director Cannon and Members of the Commission,

For the record my name is Jeff Dense, President of the Interinstitutional Faculty Senate (IFS). We represent the faculty of Oregon's Public Universities.

2015 has been a year of unprecedented transformation for Oregon higher education. The implementation of institutional governing boards at all seven public universities, a bevy of bills passed by the Oregon State Legislature addressing a wide range of important issues including free community college tuition, textbook affordability and accelerated learning, the development of an outcomes based funding formula for public universities, the hiring of Dr. Veronica Dujon as HECC Director of Academic Strategies, and much more. When the definitive history of Oregon higher education is written, 2015 will be remembered as a watershed year. IFS is pleased during 2015 we have been able to partner with the Commission in the development of a new paradigm of higher education governance in Oregon.

That being said, one must remember change in higher education is often effectuated by visionary leadership whose intentions are always directed at doing what is best for our most valuable resource-our students. IFS wishes to thank Tim Nesbitt for his leadership and service to Oregon's educational community. Tim's thoughtful, process-oriented leadership style has borne substantial fruit both within Oregon higher education and his beloved orchards. Under Tim's leadership, IFS and HECC have been able to forge a strong working relationship that has served the best interests of faculty and students, both current and future. We wish Tim the best of luck in his future endeavors.

IFS has not been alone in bringing its message of doing what is right for students. Dr. Larry Large retirement as President of the Oregon Alliance of Independent Colleges & Universities leaves a substantial void in higher education leadership in Oregon. Larry and I have repeatedly highlighted the need for interinstitutional collaboration within the Oregon educational community. I am hopeful that as you finalize your 2015-2010 strategic plan, you keep in mind the sage advice of this remarkable leader on this important topic. Thanks so much Larry!

A recent (February 2014) statement by the American Association of University Professors highlights the centrality of effective communication to the higher education enterprise. According to AAUP, "College and university governance works best when each constituency...clearly understands its role and relation to other constituencies and when communication...is open and unmediated."ⁱ IFS is about to undertake an initiative to foster stronger communication with our member institution's Faculty Senates. As the duly elected representatives of our faculty, and moreover, the faculty voice of Oregon, it is important that all stakeholder groups understand the essential role faculty play within shared governance, both on our campuses and at the state level. While "public institutions may be subject to political and legislative constraints that limit or restrict shared governance,"ⁱⁱ IFS remains committed to fostering positive working relationships with all stakeholder groups. Open and robust communication, within and across Oregon's public universities, holds the potential to aid in attainment of the state's lofty educational goals, and moreover, demonstrate the type of working relationship necessary to serve the future best interests of our great state.

Thank you for your time, and I would be glad to answer any questions you may have.

ⁱ American Association of University Professors (2014). Faculty Communication with Governing Boards: Best Practices. <http://www.aaup.org/file/FacultyCommunicationWithGoverningBoards.pdf>.

ⁱⁱ Ibid.