

## President's Report—Faculty Senate 2.23.2021

### 1. BOT meeting summary

The docket can be found here.

Access and affordability: Since 2017, the university has made strategic changes to become the most affordable public university in Oregon for resident undergraduates. In 2017, WOU ranked second-highest, WOU now ranks second-lowest on the basis of estimated cost of attendance.

The board also approved a new Board Statement on Presidential Vacancies that was drafted in preparation for the upcoming search for a new university president. The stated intention of the board, based on the recommendation of the Executive, Governance, and Trusteeship Committee, is to search for an interim president for the 2021-22 academic year.

At the meeting the board:

- Approved the creation of a Bachelor of Art in Creative Production.
- Received an update on two new criminal justice graduate certificates in Advanced Juvenile Justice Studies and Social Justice as well as a new Master of Science in Justice Studies.
- Learned of seven planned additions for undergraduate certificates: Public and Nonprofit Management Certificate, Elementary certificate in French, Intermediate Certificate in French, Elementary Certificate in Spanish, Intermediate Certificate in Spanish, Elementary Certificate in German, and Intermediate Certificate in German
- Heard an update in the university's COVID-19 safety and response plan.

### 2. Legislative updates

[Senate Bill 233](#) **Common course numbering** to support **transfer students**. PSU Provost Susan Jeffords will testify on behalf of the public universities and present our support for a law that requires common course numbering implemented through a Transfer Council. It is likely that HECC and Oregon Community College Association (OCCA) will each testify in support of these concepts and call for additional accountability and enforcement mechanisms to require alignment of course content and outcomes.

[House Bill 2835](#) **benefits navigator**. This bill had a public hearing in House Education last week. OCOP submitted a letter of support and many other voices testified in support. While there was no apparent opposition, we have learned that the fiscal impact of this bill is in the top 25% of all proposals seeking funding this session.

[House Bill 2590](#) **Task Force on Student Success for Underrepresented Students.** This bill is tentatively scheduled for a public hearing March 4 in House Education. Sponsored by Rep. Alonso Leon and Senators Dembrow and Wagner, the task force would develop student success policy proposals focusing on increasing likelihood of student success in higher education for students from populations that are underrepresented in higher education enrollment.

### **Budget**

The JWM Co-chairs issued [principles](#) for the 2021-2023 budget last week. As per their usual, they are lowering expectations around any new investments and signaling a tremendous amount of uncertainty. As noted:

- **We are starting budget discussions \$1.7 billion short in General Fund to continue current programs and services.** In addition, because of many uncertainties regarding the economy, it is anticipated there will be more volatility/uncertainty in the economic and revenue forecast that must be used to balance the budget.
- **There are more “unknowns” than typically exist at the beginning of a session.** And these “unknowns” are likely to have a major effect on the budget,
- **Oregon has taken steps to be prepared for financial shortfalls.** Oregon is one of the states best prepared for times of fiscal difficulty. Between the Rainy Day Fund and the Education Stability Fund we currently hold \$1.37 billion in state reserves. While these reserves provide a healthy cushion that can help provide stability for critical programs and services, it is important to remember that there are conditions that must be met to access reserve funds. In addition, we need to determine whether the spending of the reserves is a bridge to stability in the future or just putting off dealing with an imbalance between the amount of money we will have to spend and the costs of continuing programs and services into the future.
- **Guiding Principles.** In general, these principles are the same as those we used to develop the budget for the 2019-21 biennium. However, as we all know, the unprecedented nature of events that have occurred in 2020 both globally and, specifically, in Oregon have created significant challenges for Oregonians as individuals and as a community. As a result, we want to provide additional context for the 2021 session budget process as outlined below.
  - Address the projected 2021-23 budget deficit (currently \$1.7 billion) to allow continuation of critical programs and services, with a focus on mitigating the current recession, addressing wildfire recovery and prevention, and other ways to help Oregonians recover from the events of 2020.

### **3. Recent article of interest**

This recent [article](#) in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* provides a larger view of enrollment challenges facing universities. The challenges noted are also being addressed by WOU as we create our future.