

To the WOU Campus Communities:

I am honored to be considered for the WOU Interim Presidency. In reviewing my application materials I think you will find that I have the requisite education and experience to perform the duties of interim president, and I have done this before at two Oregon universities (EOU and OIT). I have also worked at WOU, albeit briefly in 2018, and I was very impressed with the quality of your Board members, faculty, staff and students and their commitment to the university. I intend not to be a candidate for the permanent presidency, but I will assist in the recruitment process as desired.

The past few years have brought unprecedented challenges and have frayed our trust and hope in many long held beliefs and institutions. The on-going political divisiveness of our republic coupled with the COVID pandemic has created great concerns for the health, safety and welfare of all members of the campus community. These challenges also continue to threaten the finances of the institution and challenge the collegial work of the faculty, staff and students. While I expect a lessening of these impacts they will remain among the primary challenges as we begin 2021-22 with the hope that operations and interactions continue to renormalize.

If selected, I will work hard to ensure that WOU gets its fair share of federal stimulus and state general fund funding for both operating and capital needs as this will be critical in keeping the institution vibrant, relevant and sustainable. I will attempt to rebuild community and unity through open and honest communications, involvement of various constituencies in policy formation, giving groups reasonable timelines to respond to ideas or proposals, making data-driven decisions, and generally being forthcoming with information to eliminate surprises and support hypotheses. Finally, I will advocate that we safeguard and invest in our people as they are our most important asset.

In my opinion, WOU's Strategic Plan is remarkably simple, yet a powerful document to guide the work of the campus in the coming months. "Forward Together" is the perfect title as it entails the engagement and involvement of everyone in the betterment of the enterprise. Student success, academic excellence, community engagement, accountability and sustainability and stewardship are easy tenants to support.

Briefly, I feel the following activities deserve our attention in the coming months:

- Reopening the campus based on safe, effective protocols and in compliance with all applicable guidelines;
- Rebuilding enrollment with an eye toward becoming a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI);
- Regaining our finances by maintaining a balanced budget and replenishing reserves to a prudent level;
- Continuing the growth and development of the Salem Center;
- Building on the recent efforts regarding diversity, equity and inclusion by supporting the recently created task force and other related initiatives;
- Enhancing fundraising and continuing to work on the capital campaign;
- Rebuilding our research portfolio, if feasible;
- Attracting and retaining a diverse faculty and staff;
- Being an exemplar for sustainability; and last but not least
- Recruiting and hiring a high quality permanent president.

We are well positioned and if we move forward together we will succeed! I look forward to a challenging, yet rewarding year. We can do this!

Jay Kenton, Ph.D.