

Docket Item:

University Program Approval: Southern Oregon University, Master of Outdoor Adventure and Expedition Leadership

Summary:

Southern Oregon University proposes a new degree program leading to a Master of Outdoor Adventure and Expedition Leadership. Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) staff completed a review of the proposed program. After analysis, HECC staff recommends approval of the program as proposed.

Staff Recommendation:

The HECC recommends the adoption of the following resolution:

RESOLVED, that the Higher Education Coordinating Commission approve the following program: Master of Outdoor Adventure and Expedition Leadership at Southern Oregon University.



Southern Oregon University seeks the Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Commission's approval to offer an instructional program leading to a Master of Outdoor Adventure and Expedition Leadership.

1. *Describe the purpose and relationship of the proposed program to the institution's mission and strategic plan.*

Southern Oregon University's (SOU) mission is to be an inclusive campus community dedicated to student success, intellectual growth, and responsible citizenship. A signature area of focus is to offer academic programs and co-curricular opportunities that respond to regional needs and resources.

SOU's tradition of regional service is reflected in its mission and planning. The Master of Outdoor Adventure and Expedition Leadership (MAOEL) aligns with this commitment, contributing to the regional labor resources, and offering place-bound students programming that is not currently offered at SOU or in the state. Practicum and service learning opportunities for students build partnerships, and the program utilizes and augments the region's resources, providing well-trained professionals who are positioned for leadership roles in a wide variety of fields and sectors.

This program's mission and vision also align with SOU's current phase of very strategic intentional growth and expansion. Growth in the university's Outdoor Adventure Leadership undergraduate program has been steadily increasing over the past five years, as has demand from students for opportunities to pursue post-graduate training. The program also seeks to recruit faculty who will increase the recruitment and retention of students. Specifically, this proposed Master degree program is part of a broader vision for the university's long-term goals and strategic planning of the institution in the following ways:

- SOU has recently faced enrollment challenges. This new graduate program will draw students to campus. We expect that many of these students will be from the region or be place-bound students. SOU serves a large group of such students; 54% of our current student cohort are residents of southern Oregon, and students from Jackson and Josephine counties are increasing, while 25% are non-traditional students and California students through Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE).
- Due to significant student demand, the popularity of non-academic Outdoor Programs and academic degrees throughout the nation, and the minimal cost it would take to develop this master's program, this would be a proactive endeavor for SOU with significant potential to attract high-level graduate students.
- There are many businesses, non-profit agencies, and government entities in the region associated with outdoor recreation. This program would allow for more

community outreach and partnerships through student practicum and service learning opportunities.

- According to recent statistics and predictions, many job opportunities nationwide are available in outdoor recreation. SOU and the MOAEL program will prepare students to meet this rising demand.

2. *What evidence of need does the institution have for the program?*

The Outdoor Industry Association reports that states such as Utah, Colorado, and Washington have recognized outdoor recreation as a core priority for the health of their citizens and economy, creating and investing in high-level positions charged with the dual role of supporting the outdoor industry and improving outdoor recreation opportunities in the state. Oregon is anticipated to see the appointment of a similar position in the near future. Oregon Senator Ron Wyden and Representative Earl Blumenauer introduced the “Recreation, Not Red Tape Act” in 2016 to help remove barriers to outdoor recreation, making it easier for more Americans to get outdoors and enjoy its benefits, and to generate jobs. The bill states that, “Congress supports the creation of outdoor recreation sector leadership positions within the economic development offices of States or in the Office of the Governor to guide the growth of this sector.” In addition, in December 2016, President Obama signed into law the Outdoor Recreation Jobs and Economic Impact Act, recognizing the outdoor recreation industry as a significant economic driver and instructing the Department of Commerce to assess and analyze the U.S. outdoor recreation economy, which supports an estimated six million jobs and \$646 billion in economic activity.

Currently, students in Oregon must leave the state to seek graduate programs in the field of outdoor leadership, making access to such programs difficult for underserved populations. SOU would provide a regional solution to statewide goals of promoting the outdoor and tourism industry and providing a well-educated and experienced work force.

Outdoor Recreation falls within the tourism sector of Oregon’s economy and, according to the Oregon Tourism Commission, 95% of Oregonians believe the industry is important to Oregon’s economy. This sector contributed \$8.8 billion in direct visitor spending in 2011. In addition, 82% of Oregonians see tourism as environmentally friendly, and 70% believe the industry improves the state’s quality of life. In addition, 66% of Oregonians voted for Measure 99, ensuring funding for Outdoor School Education. The outdoor and tourism industry benefits all regions of Oregon, especially in rural counties.

3. *Are there similar programs in the state? If so, how does the proposed program supplement, complement, or collaborate with those programs?*

Southern Oregon University will be the only institution in Oregon offering a Master’s degree in the outdoor leadership discipline, and one of only a dozen universities across the country, with only two programs in the Western United States.

All appropriate University committees and the Statewide Provosts Council have unanimously approved the proposed program. The Southern Oregon University's Board of Trustees approved the program on February 16, 2017.

Recommendation to the Commission

The Statewide Provosts Council recommends that the Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Commission authorize Southern Oregon University to establish an instructional program leading to a Master of Outdoor Adventure and Expedition Leadership, effective Fall 2017.

Institution: Southern Oregon University

Program: Master of Outdoor Adventure and Expedition Leadership

Action: At the April 6, 2017 meeting, the Statewide Provosts Council approved a new program for Southern Oregon University, Master of Outdoor Adventure and Expedition Leadership, to move forward to the Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Commission for its review and approval. The Southern Oregon University's Board of Trustees approved it at their February 16, 2017 meeting.

Eastern Oregon University

Sarah Witte, provost

Approved

Opposed

Abstained



Oregon Health & Science University

Elena Andresen, interim provost

Approved

Opposed

Abstained



Oregon State University

Ed Feser, provost

Approved

Opposed

Abstained



Oregon Tech

LeAnn Maupin, acting provost

Approved

Opposed

Abstained



Portland State University

Sona Andrews, provost

Approved

Opposed

Abstained



Southern Oregon University

Susan Walsh, provost

Approved

Opposed

Abstained



University of Oregon

Scott Coltrane, provost

Approved

Opposed

Abstained



Western Oregon University

Steve Scheck, provost

Approved

Opposed

Abstained

