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Neil Bryant, Chair
Higher Education Coordinating Commission
255 Capitol Street NE
Salem, OR 97310

December 11, 2017

Dear Chair Bryant and Commissioners,

We enjoy a very beneficial partnership with Southern Oregon University and we'd like to express our support for SOU's independent board and their continued development of online education.

With a workforce that extends from coast-to-coast, we have chosen to invest in southern Oregon as our home because we believe in our community and our university partner to help develop the people we need to be a competitive company.

Lithia Motors is one of two Fortune 500 companies headquartered in Oregon. Approximately 40% of the managerial employees at our corporate office are SOU graduates. We hire SOU students as interns, and groom them as our employees; we send our high-performers to SOU to earn advanced degrees; and we turn to SOU for professional development opportunities.

Beyond the classroom, we're grateful for SOU's cultural amenities that help us attract and retain employees. From performing arts to guest lecturers to outstanding sports teams, SOU gives us reasons to listen closely, to think deeply, and to cheer often. We've also had the pleasure of conducting fundraising alongside SOU student athletes and they've impressed us with their leadership and maturity.

Southern Oregon University has become one of our key partners. They're engaged throughout our business community and they're shaping their curriculum to prepare students for Oregon's emerging needs. We are pleased to sign on as a partner in SOU's online MBA program providing our 13,000 team members across the country the flexibility to continue their professional development while working.

Although the past several years has been challenging for educational institutions, we applaud SOU's ability to make the tough decisions and strategic investments that have increased student enrollment during a tight market. These are the kinds of decisions effective business leaders make.

We're excited to grow our partnership with Southern Oregon University and we strongly encourage the expansion of online education for employed candidates.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bryan DeBoer", written over a horizontal line.

Bryan DeBoer
CEO & President, Lithia Motors Inc.