

Now4 OSU-Cascades

Higher Education Coordinating Commission
255 Capitol Street NE, Third Floor
Salem, OR 97310

December 14, 2017

RE: Capital Facility Needs of OSU-Cascades/Agenda Item 9.3

Dear Chair Bryant and Commission Members:

We write on behalf of Now4 OSU-Cascades, a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting the growth and impact of OSU-Cascades. Today we request that the capital needs of OSU-Cascades be adequately reflected in the Higher Education Coordinating Commission's capital ranking process and rubric.

The State's intent in establishing a stand-alone four-year university in Central Oregon dates back to 2001. At that time, it was uncertain what form a university would take. But step-by-step, with support from throughout the region (Crook, Deschutes, and Jefferson counties), from past and current Governors and Legislatures, and from Oregon State University and other institutions, the region's dream has become a reality in the form of OSU-Cascades.

OSU-Cascades is the first new public university in Oregon in over fifty years. It's understandable that its needs aren't yet fully reflected in the State's capital ranking process and rubric. But the time for change is now. Without it, OSU-Cascades will continue to face a systematic disadvantage in capital funding and risk falling behind in its efforts to serve the region's growing higher education needs.

A Higher Education Desert

A 2016 American Council on Education study describes Central Oregon as an Education Desert. Until OSU-Cascades was established as a full four-year college in 2015, the Bend-Redmond MSA was the largest in the nation without a four-year institution – the nearest being OSU in Corvallis, which is almost three hours away under the best driving conditions.

OSU-Cascades' student body reflects the demographics of an underserved and largely rural community: 67% of OSU-Cascades students are from Central Oregon, 32% are the first in their family to go to college, 52% are Pell Grant eligible and 16% are U.S. minority students. Many students are older, with families and jobs, and unable to travel or relocate to attend college. For many, the cost to attend college elsewhere is simply too high.

Nearing Campus Capacity

Central Oregon is one of the fastest growing regions in the state and nation. The Bend-La Pine school district is adding over 500 new students per year. Businesses are growing and relocating to Central Oregon, and they need educated workers. Without additional capacity, OSU-Cascades will be unable to serve the growing demand, leaving students' educational goals and life dreams out of reach and businesses searching elsewhere for employees.

The current 10-acre campus can serve about 2,000 students. It is estimated that its capacity will likely be exceeded by 2021. As you know, the current expansion plans, which include

both a second academic building and student services center, will allow the campus to accommodate 2,500 students at a cost to the state of \$69.5 million. At full build-out, the campus will serve 3,500-5,000 students, and require additional state support.

Adapting Capital Rubric to Address Today's Higher Education Needs

We ask that the HECC's capital ranking process and rubric be amended to address the distinct needs of OSU-Cascades in the following ways:

1. Treat the capital needs of OSU-Cascades as distinct from those of OSU Corvallis. OSU-Cascades functions as a separate campus that is intended to meet a regional need. The campus's operational needs are already addressed in such a fashion. The capital funding process should reflect that as well.
2. Adapt the rubric to better account for the needs of a new campus with new facilities. Unlike established campuses, construction projects for OSU-Cascades must include significant infrastructure investments such as new streets and transportation systems, land purchases, and utility systems. New campuses also shouldn't be penalized by rubrics that give extra weight to refurbishing old buildings.
3. Adjust the rubric to better recognize the importance of expanding access to higher education in underserved and rapidly growing regions of the state. In particular, the current rubric appears to limit the growth at a specific campus simply because there may be capacity at another. This could have adverse effects on regions that are underserved such as Central Oregon.

By modifying the rubric to address these issues, both regional and statewide goals – including 40-40-20 – will be more attainable. Without addressing these matters now, ahead of Oregon's 2019 legislative session, the systematic disadvantages inherent in the current system will leave OSU-Cascades falling further behind.

We have the full support of OSU-Cascades, OSU Corvallis, and President Ed Ray in seeking these changes. We stand in unison in our desire and intent to work with the HECC to make it happen together. We ask for your support.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Amy Tykeson and Jane E Teater
Co-Founders, Now4-OSU Cascades

