

Oregon Council of Presidents



December 14, 2017

Dear Executive Director Cannon,

Thank you for requesting input from the university presidents on the Higher Education Coordinating Committee's Strategic Framework. The Strategic Framework will be an important way audiences are introduced to the primary roles, vision, mission and values of the Commission. Subsequent updates to the 2016-2020 Strategic Plan will likely use the Framework as a starting point so we appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback.

Four years after the passage of SB 270 (2013), which established independent governance of Oregon's public universities, it feels both timely and appropriate to continue the discussion of the Commission's role in Oregon's new postsecondary system. As you know well, HB 3120 (2013)—developed in coordination with SB 270—charges the Commission with adopting a postsecondary education strategic plan for our state and recommending a consolidated higher education budget that aligns to the strategic plan. These two essential functions of Oregon's coordinating commission support our collective success by providing the strategic direction and requisite resources for Oregon's public institutions to achieve the state's postsecondary goals.

Oregon public universities share the HECC's values around access and affordability for all Oregonians. Furthermore, we affirm that the full realization of these values will, "require a view that transcends the boundaries of traditional support funds for institutions." Increased legislative investments in higher education over the past two biennia are a welcome change from decades of disinvestment. However, despite recent state investments, Oregon still ranks significantly below the national average in appropriations per FTE and below pre-recession funding levels. The Higher Education Coordinating Commission is uniquely positioned to develop and advocate for a comprehensive, long-term post-secondary funding plan and should focus its considerable influence on advocating for a sustained budget that supports our shared values of access and affordability for all students.

Just as HECC is uniquely positioned within our state's postsecondary education system, institutions are uniquely positioned to serve students. Public universities have the experience and expertise to deliver the academic programs and support services to ensure that students are successful in achieving their postsecondary education goals. Oregon's public universities should continue to have the flexibility to determine how to employ their resources most effectively. Suggestions that the Commission will "evaluate individual programs and initiatives" represent a level of oversight that is outside of the purview of the Commission and counterproductive to the larger goals of achieving our shared values.

The framework emphasizes that accessible and affordable undergraduate education is incredibly important. We agree. At the same time, accessibility and affordability must be carefully balanced with protecting quality of instruction. Moreover, graduate education and research both play critical roles at many of Oregon's public universities, and they contribute directly to the undergraduate learning experience. While the Commission's

focus does not include research, it would be helpful if the Commission's framework recognized that Oregon's universities have distinct missions with regard to instruction, research and outreach and engagement, as those distinct missions shape how the overall mix of higher education in Oregon can most effectively be deployed and resourced to advance Oregon's attainment and economic competitiveness goals.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft framework. We welcome any questions on these comments or on other aspects of the framework.

Sincerely,



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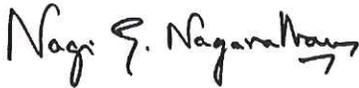
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