

2017 UNIVERSITY EVALUATION: Southern Oregon University



Source: State of Oregon

2017 UNIVERSITY EVALUATION: SOUTHERN OREGON UNIVERSITY

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INTRODUCTION

This report is guided by Oregon Revised Statute 352.061, and revised by SB 54 (2017) which requires that the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) submit to the Legislative Assembly an evaluation of public universities listed in ORS 352.002. Each public university must be evaluated in the manner required by this section once every two years. The purpose of this report is to evaluate the contributions of Southern Oregon University (SOU) to State objectives for higher education as articulated in statute and in the HECC's Strategic Plan (https://www.oregon.gov/HigherEd/Documents/HECC/Reports-and-Presentations/HECC-StrategicPlan_2016.pdf). The Report relies on a combination of accreditation reports, self-assessments conducted by the university on criteria jointly developed with the HECC, and state and federal data. It signals areas of key interest to the HECC that support the objectives of the State of Oregon: student success as measured by degree completion; access and affordability as measured by equity across socioeconomic, racial/ethnic and regional (urban/rural) groups; academic quality and research; financial sustainability; and continued collaboration across universities in support of the State's mission for higher education. Additionally, the report describes how SOU's Board of Trustees has operated since its formation in July 2015. The form and content of subsequent annual evaluations will be guided by feedback from legislators, the public, and the universities about how to improve the usefulness of this process and product.

LEGISLATIVE MANDATE (SB 270)

Passed by the Oregon legislature in 2013, Senate Bill 270 (SB 270) established individual governing boards at the University of Oregon and Portland State University. It also established a process for the other five Oregon public universities to establish individual governing boards, which they subsequently did. In addition, the bill required the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) to conduct annual evaluations of the universities. During the 2017 Legislative Session, the legislature amended ORS 352.061 requiring the HECC to evaluate each public university once every two-years. The stipulations required by the bill are codified in Oregon Revised Statute (ORS) 352.061.

ORS 352.061(2) stipulates that the HECC's evaluations of universities must include:

- a) A report on the university's achievement of outcomes, measures of progress, goals and targets; and
- b) An assessment of the university's progress toward achieving the mission of all education beyond high school as described in ORS 350.014 (the 40-40-20 goal).
- c) An assessment of how well the establishment of a governing board at the university comports with the findings set forth in ORS 352.025.

Finally, ORS 352.061(2)(c) also requires that the HECC assess university governing boards against the findings set forth in [ORS 352.025](#), including that governing boards:

- a) Provide transparency, public accountability and support for the university.
- b) Are close to and closely focused on the individual university.
- c) Do not negatively impact public universities that do not have governing boards.

- d) Lead to greater access and affordability for Oregon residents and do not disadvantage Oregon students relative to out-of-state students.
- e) Act in the best interests of both the university and the State of Oregon as a whole.
- f) Promote the academic success of students in support of the mission of all education beyond high school as described in ORS 350.014 (the 40-40-20 goal).

For context, ORS 352.025 notes four additional Legislative findings:

- a) Even with universities with governing boards, there are economy-of-scale benefits to having a coordinated university system.
- b) Even with universities with governing boards, shared services may continue to be shared among universities.
- c) Legal title to all real property, whether acquired before or after the creation of a governing board, through state funding, revenue bonds or philanthropy, shall be taken and held in the name of the State of Oregon, acting by and through the governing board.
- d) The Legislative Assembly has a responsibility to monitor the success of governing boards at fulfilling their missions, their compacts and the principles stated in this section.

In 2017, the HECC will evaluate four institutions: Southern Oregon University, Oregon Institute of Technology, Western Oregon University, and Eastern Oregon University.

EVALUATION PROCESS

In an effort to approach the first annual evaluation in a collaborative manner, in 2015 the HECC formed a work group comprised of university provosts, inter-institutional faculty senate, staff from the Chief Education Office, HECC staff, then-HECC Commissioner Kirby Dyess, and other university faculty and staff. The workgroup began meeting in February 2015 with a focus on understanding the purpose and scope of the evaluation as defined in statutes, the structure of the evaluation, and the process for the evaluation. As a result of these conversations, an evaluation framework was developed as a tool to assist in the evaluation process.

During its development, the framework was shared with various groups such as university presidents, university faculty senates, and others, to seek feedback and input on the framework. The framework was revised based on input and suggestions and three categories were identified as organizers. These included institutional focus areas, governance structure focus areas, and academic quality. Each category contained key metrics and performance measures of academic quality that were aligned with the newly-adopted student success and completion model indicators. After final review and consideration of stakeholder feedback, the HECC adopted the framework on September 10, 2015. The framework template is populated with data from the HECC Research Office and then verified by university offices for institutional research and data. All data included in this report are from the HECC unless otherwise indicated.

A balanced evaluation of whether Oregon's public universities are meeting the goals described for them by State law does not lend itself to a formulaic or mechanical approach. The Commission draws from contextual elements such as the State's fluctuating funding for higher education and changing student demographics to help explain data in the framework, and progress towards goals. The Commission also leverages other evaluations already undertaken by universities including self-studies, accreditation reports and the work of

boards of trustees to provide a perspective that is uniquely focused on each institution’s contribution to serving the State’s higher education mission under the new governance model.

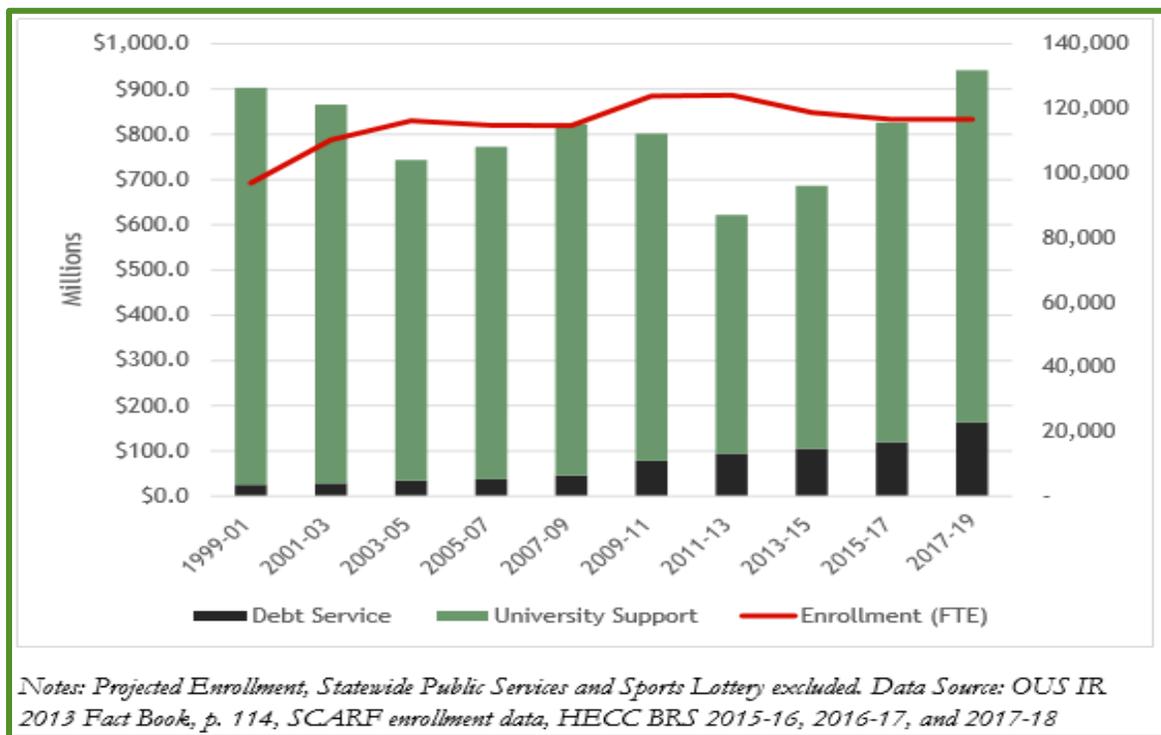
This report is focused on the legislative charge and the HECC’s primary areas of emphasis as indicated in its Strategic Plan. This report is not a comprehensive evaluation. It reflects the narrower scope of legislative issues of interest, incorporating findings from accreditation studies where there is overlap.

STATEWIDE CONTEXT

Funding History

Over the past several biennia, state funding for public universities has not kept pace with enrollment or inflation. While recent investments have moved the needle in a positive direction, additional funding is necessary to support institutions as they work to increase the graduation and completion rates for a growing, diverse population.

Figure 1: Public University Funding



Governance Changes

Senate Bill 270 (2013) outlines the benefits that are to be achieved from having public universities with governing boards that are transparent, closely aligned with the university’s mission, and that “act in the best interest of both the university and state of Oregon as a whole.” In addition, the Legislature found that there

are benefits to having economies of scale and as such, universities were granted the ability to continue participation in shared service models. It is important to note that all public universities are required to participate in group health insurance, a select set of group retirement plans, and collective bargaining through July 1, 2019 per ORS 352.129.

Local Conditions and Mission

This section is informed by Southern Oregon University's Year Seven Report to the NWCCU submitted in September 2016 (SOU Year Seven Report to NWCCU Sept 19 2016.pdf).

Southern Oregon University (SOU) has provided outstanding educational opportunities to students for over 140 years. The Institution is a key partner with businesses, government organizations, and community partners as well as other educational institutions. Over the past several years, the University has faced significant challenges, including the changing profile of higher education in Oregon, reductions in state allocations, shifting student demographics, and evolving workforce opportunities. SOU declared retrenchment in 2013. Since then it has been guided by a holistic, intentional and realistic plan that articulates reductions in costs and increased efficiencies, but also creates opportunities to build programs and operating principles that should carry the institution into the next strategic planning process. SOU continues to adapt to the needs of the region and their students, and committed to their mission and goals of preparing students for success in college and beyond.

Liberal arts universities such as SOU have mission statements that describe high-level expectations for their students. Southern Oregon University strives to achieve a balance between providing a liberal arts education and meeting the professional and workforce needs of its region. These objectives are expressed in SOU's core themes and inform the indicators that are assessed to show the extent that their curriculum, academic programs, and support services address these themes.

The mission of SOU was originally approved by the State Board of Higher Education in 2008, consistent with its legal authority for higher education in the state of Oregon. Oregon Revised Statute 352.089(1), established in July, 2014, requires higher education governing boards to adopt a mission statement for the university and forward that statement to the Higher Education Coordinating Commission. ORS 350.075 and 350.085 require the HECC to review and approve public university mission statements.

The current mission and commitments of SOU were considered by the HECC in December 2015, during the presentation of SOU's Interim Progress Report and are reproduced below. However, SOU has been engaged in an extensive strategic planning process that includes a revision of its mission and vision, which was approved by their Board of Trustees in November 2017 and scheduled for approval by the HECC in January 2018. The Mission and Commitments below will be updated prior to submission to the Legislature if time permits.

MISSION:

Southern Oregon University is an inclusive campus community dedicated to student success, intellectual growth, and responsible global citizenship.

COMMITMENTS:

Southern Oregon University is committed to a challenging and practical liberal arts education centered on student learning, accessibility, and civic engagement; academic programs, partnerships, public service, outreach, sustainable practices, and economic development activities that address regional needs such as health and human services, business, and education; and outstanding programs that draw on and enrich our unique arts community and bioregion.

ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY IMPACT:

SOU is a key partner with businesses, government organizations, and community partners as well as other educational institutions. This assessment of SOU's economic impact on the regional economies of Josephine and Jackson Counties, is informed by an analysis conducted by the Southern Oregon University Research Center (SOURCE) and documented in the report titled *The Economic Impact of Southern Oregon University* available here [https://inside.sou.edu/assets/ir/docs/SOURCE - Economic Impact of SOU Oct 2015.pdf](https://inside.sou.edu/assets/ir/docs/SOURCE_-_Economic_Impact_of_SOU_Oct_2015.pdf).

Southern Oregon University is responsible for generating \$210 million in annual economic activity and 1,789 jobs in the State of Oregon. Much of that economic impact is felt inside the Jackson and Josephine county region, amounting to \$195 million output per year and the contribution of 1,767 jobs to the regional economy.

In terms of household incomes and business profits, SOU's annual activities generate \$115 million in wages, salaries and profits per year among Oregon businesses and households. In Jackson and Josephine Counties alone, SOU's operation leads to the generation of \$107 million per year in wages, salaries and profits.

These activities are the total effective demand that SOU brings to its surrounding economy and triggers further economic activity in the economy. Five main components of this effective demand on the economy are: SOU's payroll, recurring operations spending, construction spending, and the spending by SOU students and visitors to SOU events. In the same order, these amounts in 2014 came to \$52.7 million (payroll), \$12.8 million (operations), \$4.1 million (construction), \$30 million (student spending) and \$5.6 million (visitor spending).

Altogether in 2014, SOU's total effective demand on the economy was \$105.4 million. While some of this expenditure left the State of Oregon, most of SOU's expenditures are directed toward businesses inside Oregon and Jackson and Josephine Counties. Approximately \$98.9 million was spent inside the state, and \$95.5 million spent inside Jackson and Josephine Counties.

ACCREDITATION

This report is formative and focuses on the areas of interest identified by the Legislature and in alignment with the HECC's Strategic Plan. It is not intended to be a comprehensive evaluation of Southern Oregon University. Conditions were imposed on SOU by the OUS SBHE that defined metrics needing to be accomplished before a recommendation could be made about the continued existence of their Board of Trustees. These conditions, and a separate process to monitor them, are now supervised and evaluated by the HECC. A more comprehensive assessment and review of academic and institutional quality is available from the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU), which accredits SOU and other

universities in Oregon. Accreditation of an institution of higher education by the NWCCU indicates that it meets or exceeds criteria for the assessment of institutional quality evaluated through a peer review process. An accredited college or university is one that has been found to have the necessary resources available to achieve its stated purposes through appropriate educational programs, and to be substantially doing so, and which provides reasonable evidence that it will continue to do so in the foreseeable future. Institutional integrity also is addressed through accreditation. This section draws on the relevant parts of NWCCU reports, supplemented with information on economic and community impact (identified from SOU sources). Other components of NWCCU reports are incorporated elsewhere, as appropriate.

Southern Oregon University has evolved as an institution of higher education in the Rogue Valley for more than one hundred years. In 1895 it became Southern Oregon State Normal School and was named Southern Oregon College in 1956. As a member of the Oregon University System it was re-named Southern Oregon University in 1997. SOU offers baccalaureate degrees in the liberal arts, sciences and several professional fields. It also provides a selected number of graduate programs as well as educational programs that serve the needs of the local and regional community. In more recent times, Southern Oregon University has partnered with other higher education institutions to help achieve its outreach mission, including its association with Rogue Community College.

In February 2016, SOU was affirmed for accreditation with the NWCCU following its Year Seven Evaluation (*Mission Fulfillment and Sustainability*). The following information is drawn from the NWCCU Report (insert citation for report).

NWCCU commended faculty and staff for supporting students and student success; SOU for its proactive efforts to address sexual assault; and the SOU community for maintaining morale and “surmounting recent challenges”, including changes in leadership, the reorganization of the Oregon University System, and changes to funding structure and capital construction and physical plant infrastructure.

In affirming accreditation, NWCCU requested that the university address five (5) recommendations:

1. SOU will review its definition of mission fulfillment and planning for definition of mission fulfillment.
2. SOU will revise objectives and indicators for core themes to include both graduate and undergraduate programs.
3. SOU will develop a plan to provide adequate funding to its library, ensuring that it supports educational programs in both graduate and undergraduate studies.
4. In its development of a new strategic plan, SOU will ensure that core themes are consistent with its strategic plan, and align with and contribute to achievement of the goals or intended outcomes of the respective programs and services offered by the institution. NWCCU also required that SOU ensure that core themes, and any subsequent changes to them, be approved by its board of trustees, consistent with Eligibility Requirement 3.
5. SOU will continue to expand the use of assessment data and document assessment processes and results, with particular attention to utilizing assessment data to inform institutional improvement of academic

and learning support programs and practices that lead to enhancement of student learning achievement (i.e. “closing the loop”). SOU is also advised to ensure that assessment occurs in both undergraduate and graduate programs.

NWCCU requested that SOU submit an Ad Hoc Report in Fall 2017 to address recommendations (1) and (2) and that it submit an addendum to the 2019 mid-cycle report that addresses recommendations (3), (4) and (5). In keeping with the accreditation cycle, SOU is also required to submit the next report in the accreditation cycle: Year One Report (Mission and Core Themes).

On December 14, 2017, SOU submitted its Year One Self Evaluation report on Core Themes and Mission to NWCCU, as well as the Ad Hoc Report addressing recommendations (1) and (2) on the Year Seven Report submitted in 2016. Recommendations were addressed during Year One planning for mission and core themes, and within strategic planning processes. NWCCU also requested that SOU submit an addendum to its 2019 Year Three report that addresses recommendations (3), (4), (5). SOU is on track with its accreditation cycle.

The following programs also accredited by external evaluators:

- Business (Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs,
- Chemistry (American Chemical Society),
- Music (National Association of Schools of Music),
- Clinical Mental Health Counseling Program (Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs)
- Education (Oregon Teacher Standards and Practices Commission)
- Environmental Education (North American Association for Environmental Education)

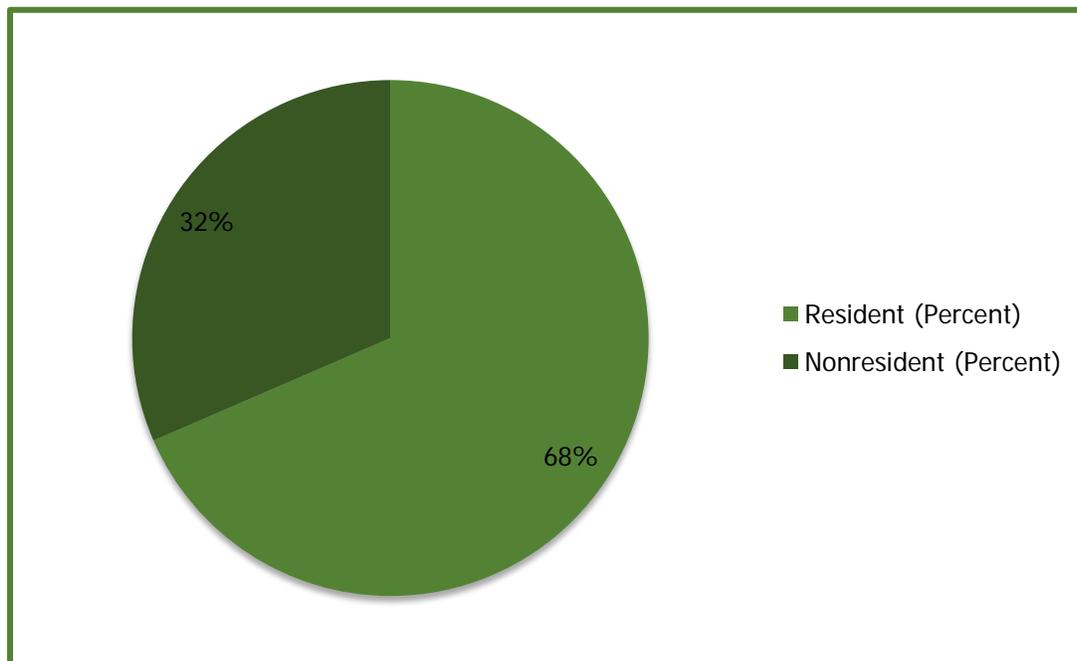
STUDENT ACCESS AND SUCCESS

Nationally, enrollment in higher education has generally declined since its peak during the Great Recession. Oregon sees a similar pattern with some variation across institutions, particularly in the enrollment and completion rates for low income, minority, and rural students. This section of the report is focused on tracking trends in enrollment and completion outcomes.

As described by Figures 2 and 3, the majority of SOU students (68.0%) are resident, and the majority (61.2%) also attend full-time.

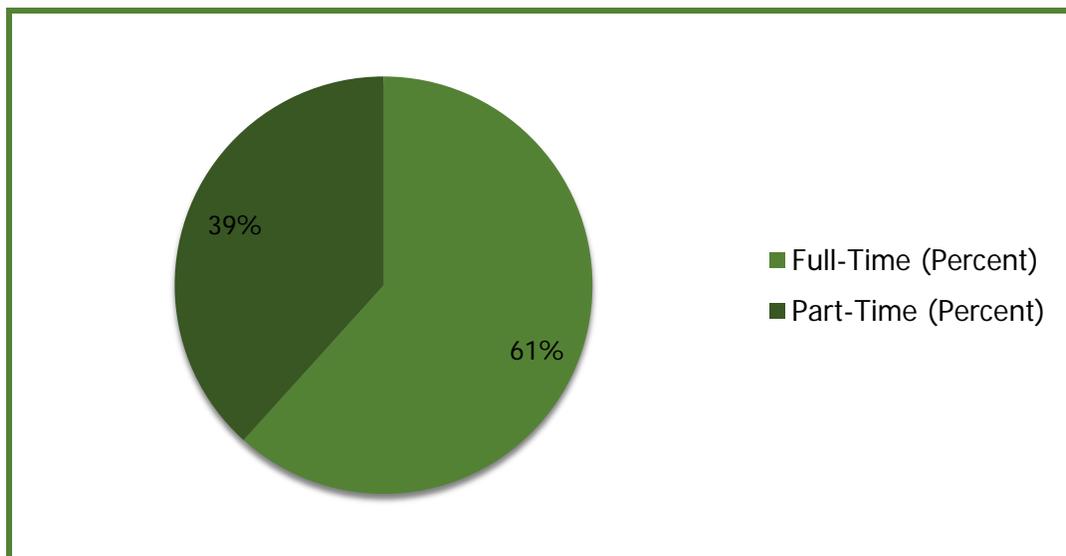
SOU enrollment has been relatively steady over the last five years. In the most recent year (Fall 2016 to Fall 2017) enrollment increased from 6,088 to 6,139, or 0.8%. During this year, non-resident enrollment increased by 5.0% while resident enrollment increased by 0.3 percent. Overall, student FTE has increased from Fall 2016 to Fall 2017 by 2.1 percent.

Figure 2: SOU Student Enrollment by Residency, Fall 2016



Source: HECC (2017)

Figure 3: SOU Student Enrollment by Full-Time/Part-Time Status, Fall 2016



Source: HECC (2017)

In Fall 2017, SOU enrolled 6,139 students. Of those, 1,319 were newly admitted undergraduates, compared to 1,265 newly admitted undergraduates in the previous academic year. The enrollment increase was concentrated entirely among resident students, an increase of 7.9%; non-resident enrollment was flat.

While single year enrollment changes do not constitute a trend on their own, they are generally consistent with longer term enrollment patterns at SOU. SOU's enrollment of underrepresented students has been steadily increasing year-over-year, representing a 33% growth since 2011. SOU's total enrollment has increased 20.8% since Fall, 2008, but is down 9.0% from its post-recession peak in 2011. Growth since 2008 has been driven by non-resident students, who are up almost 78% over that time period. Resident student enrollment peaked in 2011 and, despite an 18% decline from 2011 to 2016, remains 4.7% higher today than in 2008. In Fall, 2017 resident students account for roughly 68% of SOU's student body. SOU awarded 3.1% more degrees in 2016-17 than the prior year, continuing a growth trend that has increased by 5.7% since 2013. The most recent six-year graduation rate is 37.5% for Pell Grant recipients, 44.6% for underrepresented minority students, and 46.1% for all students. SOU is steadily increasing the number of degrees awarded to underrepresented minority students.

SOU students come from diverse backgrounds. In Fall 2016, 17.0% of SOU's total enrollment came from underrepresented student populations. Over time, SOU has seen large enrollment increases among Hispanic students and students who identify as being of two or more races. In addition, 36.9% of SOU's total student population are Pell Grant recipients.

Table 1: SOU 4th Week Headcount Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity, Fall 2014, 2015, 2016, and 2017

Race/ Ethnicity	Fall 2014	Fall 2015	Fall 2016	Fall 2017	Change Fall 2016 to Fall 2017
Non-Resident Alien	150	159	162	153	(9)
American Indian/ Alaska Native	71	75	70	65	(5)
Asian	124	134	123	123	-
Black Non-Hispanic	116	125	111	108	(3)
Hispanic	478	523	531	554	23
Pacific Islander	26	29	32	37	5
Two or more races, Underrepresented Minorities	208	265	274	286	12
Two or more races, not Underrepresented Minorities	64	69	77	71	(6)
White Non-Hispanic	3,252	3,087	2,953	3001	48)
Unknown	1,712	1,749	1,755	1741	(14)

Source: HECC (2017)

Different student populations graduate at different rates. Underrepresented minority students and Pell Grant recipients graduate at rates that are, on average, four percentage points less than the rate for the overall student population, although these gaps appear to increase at the six year rate between the overall student population and underrepresented minority students. The four and six-year graduation rate for SOU First Time Freshmen who entered in the fall term of 2010 is as follows:

Table 2: Four-Year and Six-Year Graduation Rate, First Time, Full Time Freshmen Entering SOU in Fall 2010

	Four-Year Graduation Rate	Six-Year Graduation Rate
All Students	26.5 %	46.1 %
Underrepresented Minorities	22.3 %	37.5 %
Pell Grant Recipients	22.9 %	44.6 %

Source: HECC (2017)

*Fall 2010 cohort is the latest year of available data. Includes students who completed at any Oregon public university.

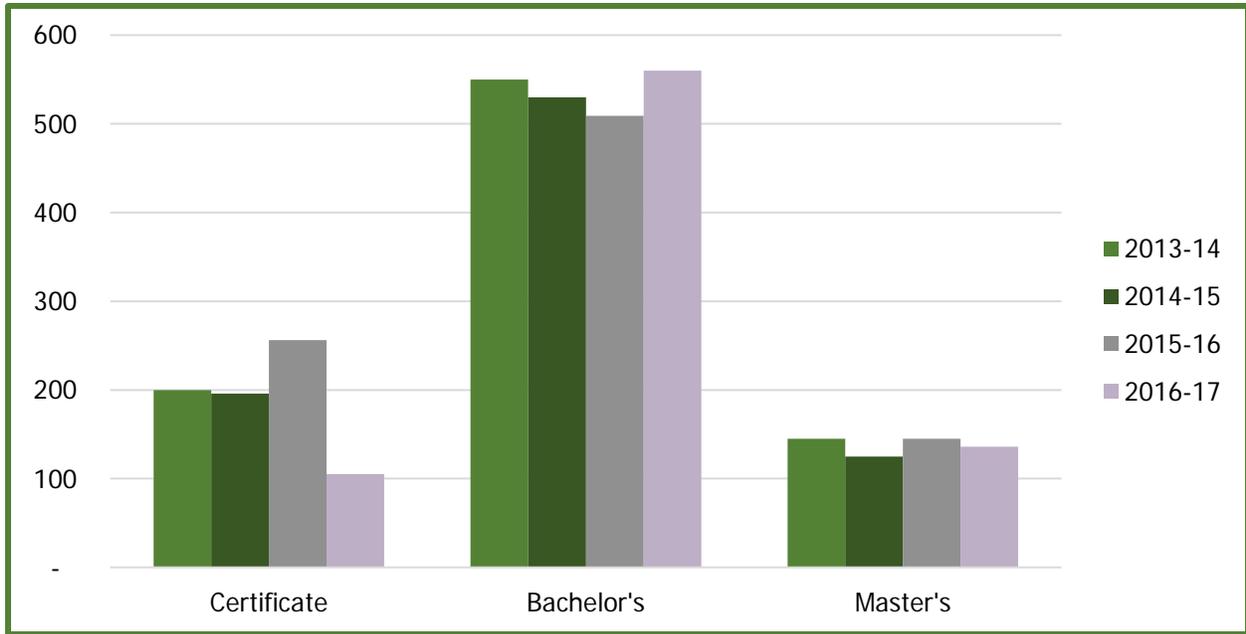
SOU's number of resident completions by award type saw measurable increases in bachelor degrees awarded, but also saw decreases in master degrees and certificates. No associate's degrees, doctoral degrees, and professional degrees were awarded because SOU does not offer those degree types.

Table 3: SOU Resident Student Completions by Award Type

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Certificate	200	196	256	105
Associate's	-	-	-	-
Bachelor's	550	530	509	560
Master's	145	125	145	136
Doctoral	-	-	-	-
Professional	-	-	-	-

Source: HECC (2017)

Figure 4: SOU Resident Student Completions by Award Type



Source: HECC (2017)

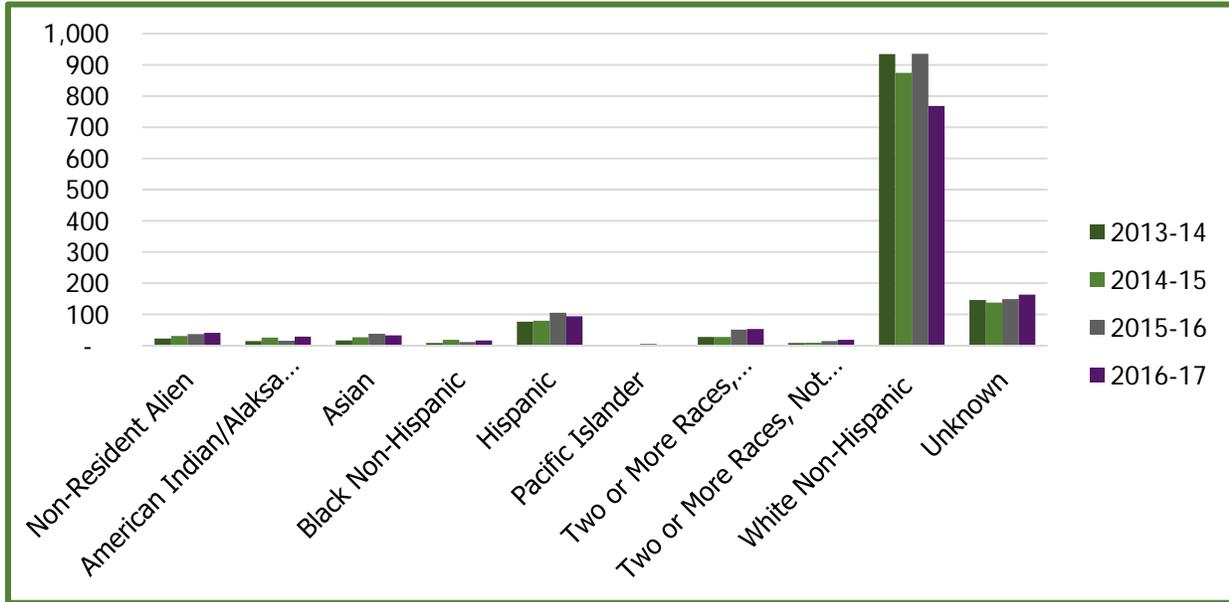
It is noteworthy that the number of degrees awarded to underrepresented minorities has been on the rise over the last three academic year cycles, from 131 in 2013-14 to 155 in 2014-15 to 192 in 2015-16, and 195 in 2016-17. That growth seems focused around Hispanic students and students who identify as being of two or more races. White Non-Hispanic students fell from 935 in 2015-16 to 768 in 2016-17, a decrease of 18 percent.

Table 4: SOU Completions by Race/Ethnicity

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Non-resident alien	23	31	37	41
American Indian/ Alaska Native	15	26	16	29
Asian	17	27	38	33
Black Non-Hispanic	9	19	12	17
Hispanic	77	80	106	94
Pacific Islander	2	2	6	1
Two or more races, Underrepresented Minorities	28	28	52	54
Two or more races, not Underrepresented Minorities	9	10	15	19
White Non- Hispanic	934	874	935	768
Unknown	146	138	149	164

Source: HECC (2017)

Figure 5: SOU Completions by Race/Ethnicity



AFFORDABILITY

Among the factors that the HECC is required (under ORS 352.065 and 352.025(1d)) to evaluate whether universities remain affordable for Oregon residents. The following constitutes our evaluation of Southern Oregon University’s affordability.

Many students and prospective students at Southern Oregon University, like their counterparts at other universities around the state and nationwide, continue to face significant challenges related to access and affordability. Public defunding of higher education is a national trend that is shifting a majority of the burden of paying for a college education to students and their families. That shift has been particularly acute in Oregon in recent years. Partly as a result of state funding cuts, resident undergraduate tuition and fees at the Southern Oregon University increased 68.8% in the last 10 years, including increases of 4.6% and 9.0% in 2016-17 and 2017-18 respectively.¹ In 2017-18, tuition increased 9.0% and fees 8.8% for an overall increase of 9.0%.^{2,3} Resident graduate students have faced similar increases.

¹ Source: <https://inside.sou.edu/enrollment/tuitionandfees.html> as well as historical OUS tuition data. Defined to include full-time resident base tuition and all mandatory fees (including incidental fees).

² This increase includes all tuition and mandatory fees (including incidental and other fees that are not subject to HECC review). As a result of the increase in the PUSF from the GRB, SOU’s tuition increase dropped from an original level of 12.0%.

³ A full-time resident undergraduate student (taking 45 credits per year or 15 credits for each of three terms) will be expected to pay \$7,427 in tuition and \$1,860 in fees during the 2017-18 academic year.

Students, however, do have access to financial aid at Southern Oregon University. In addition to need-based federal and state financial aid programs (Pell and the Oregon Opportunity Grant), Southern Oregon University students benefit from SOU's significant commitment of institutional resources to scholarships, remissions, and tuition discounts. In the 2016-17 academic year, SOU recorded \$2,528,722 in resident tuition remissions (13.8% of resident gross tuition charges). The year prior, the 2015-16 academic year, SOU recorded \$2,708,050 in resident tuition remissions (12.0% of resident gross tuition charges).

Tuition, however, tells only a part of the affordability story. The total cost of attendance for students includes significant expenses associated with housing, food, transportation, and textbooks. Southern Oregon University estimates the average student budget for living expenses annually – \$17,461 for the 2017-18 academic year⁴ – an amount that exceeds resident tuition and fees.

While it is natural to view affordability primarily in terms of the student's direct cost associated with their enrollment, a larger perspective takes into account whether the student completes his or her degree, does so in a reasonable period of time, and has earning potential commensurate with the debts that might have been incurred. On average, the earnings of federal loan recipients 10 years after beginning school at SOU are \$37,200.⁵ Of Southern Oregon University undergraduate degree recipients who leave the university with federal loan debt, their average federally-backed debt load is \$23,492. According to the College Scorecard, in the 2015-16 academic year, 47% of all students had federally supported loans and 38% received Pell grants.

ACADEMIC QUALITY

The introduction of a new state budget model that provides incentives for growth in enrollment and graduation outcomes has triggered concerns across various sectors that the pursuit of economic sustainability may adversely affect academic quality and research. A concern is that institutions might be tempted to lower standards in order to recruit and graduate more students. In light of this concern, there is interest in sustaining rigorous academic quality across all institutions. In partnership with all public universities, the HECC relies on regular external accreditation reviews, and collaborative partnerships with organizations such as the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO) and the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU) to pursue promising initiatives to develop nationally-normed outcomes to assess and track student learning and post-graduation success.

SOU has clearly established processes, guidelines and oversight committees for curricular planning; program development and review and faculty evaluation.

Proposed degrees, programs, and certificates originate with faculty at the program level, and are then routed through several levels of approval: first, from program chair to division director, then to the university Curriculum Committee or Graduate Council (for graduate programs); then to the Faculty Senate. Following approval by the Faculty Senate, proposals are presented to the SOU Board of Trustees, the Oregon Public University Provosts Council for evaluation and recommendation, and then to the Higher Education Coordinating Commission for final approval.

⁴ Source: <https://inside.sou.edu/enrollment/financial-aid/budgets/index.html>

⁵ Source for earnings, Pell grant information and debt load is the College Scorecard: <https://collegescorecard.ed.gov/>

Procedures and guidelines are available at: <https://inside.sou.edu/provost/curriculum.html>

The Faculty Senate Curriculum Committee's charge is to "study existing curricula and consider all changes in curricula including degrees offered, degree requirements, and specific courses." The Curriculum Committee is comprised mainly of teaching faculty (6), and three ex officio administrative members, including the Registrar and the Associate Provost. Its charge is to review and approve all additions or deletions of undergraduate courses or programs, as well as changes to curricular structure (such as pre-requisites, electives, or credit hour requirements) and then submits their recommendations to the Faculty Senate for approval. The University Studies Committee (USC) reviews courses that are proposed for inclusion in general education. The Graduate Council (GC), another Faculty Senate committee, reviews additions, deletions, and changes to graduate-level programs and courses.

Description, charge and composition of Faculty Senate Committees are found in the Bylaws of the SOU [Faculty Constitution](#) (specifically, section 1.32).

According to Section 5 of the Bylaws of the SOU Faculty Constitution, faculty members are evaluated through several means: (a) student evaluations; (b) annual evaluations completed by program chairs for faculty members on one-year fixed term appointments and term-by-term faculty upon completion of 3 years or 45 ELUS; (c) colleague evaluations for faculty holding tenure or extendable appointments.

Terms and procedures for faculty evaluations are outlined in sections 5.350-5.373 of the Faculty Senate Bylaws. A Program Chairs Manual with guidelines is published and provided on the Provost's web site and in the Collective Bargaining Agreement between the Association of Professors, Southern Oregon University (AP:SOU) and SOU.

Annually, each faculty member also completes a Faculty Professional Activities Report (FPAR), which includes review and self-evaluation of teaching effectiveness, scholarly activity, service activity, and goals for professional development in these and other areas (including administration for faculty with administrative responsibilities). SOU is currently in the process of implementing the Activity Insight software program for faculty reporting and evaluation procedures.

Faculty Professional Development

Faculty evaluation and professional development are fundamental to sustaining academic quality. SOU has clearly defined processes for faculty evaluation. These include:

1. Professional Development Accounts

According to SOU's Collective Bargaining Agreement (Article 9, Section B), Professional Development Accounts (PDAs) are provided to support each full-time professorial and professional faculty member's development in the areas of teaching, scholarship, or service. Each full-time professional faculty member at SOU with an ongoing appointment is allocated \$825 and each full-time professorial faculty member with an ongoing appointment will be allocated \$1,375. Approval for use of these funds is contingent upon the member demonstrating to the Chair how the proposed use of the funds will support activities or goals described in the faculty member's approved annual Faculty Professional Activity Report. Examples of approved uses of PDA include:

professional travel; the purchase of equipment, software, or other materials; use of consultants; release time for professional activities or summer stipends for scholarly activities; professional society dues, books, and journal subscriptions.

2. Professional Development Grants

In addition to Professional Development Accounts, the 2015-2108 Collective Bargaining Agreement allocates an additional \$126,000 (\$63,000 for AYs 2015-16, 2016-17; 2017-18) for annual Professional Development Grants for which faculty may apply via proposal submitted to the Faculty Development Committee. According to the CBA, “Priority shall be given to proposals for substantive activities related to: course revision, assessment, improvement of teaching methodology and skills, updating faculty in their disciplinary fields, retraining faculty for new assignments, providing instructional resources, and developing interdisciplinary courses, scholarship, and academic conference travel.” Proposals should be consistent with the faculty member’s professional appointment, and may be evaluated by the Provost, in consultation with the Faculty Development Committee, for alignment with institutional priorities.

3. Ongoing professional development: The Center for Instructional Support

SOU’s Center for Instructional Support assists faculty members with professional development by providing resources, technology support, training and pedagogical assistance. In addition to ongoing and on-call services for faculty around teaching activities, CIS also implements programming for faculty, including new, adjunct and other faculty orientation.

In 2015-16, CIS worked with the Provost’s office to implement the Curriculum Design Academy. Initially funded through Student Success Initiative monies provided by the legislature, CDA was designed to provide support for curriculum/course design, study and adoption of best teaching practices, and opportunities for collaboration to meet objectives of student success, retention and persistence, and completion for first- year, foundational or “gateway” courses with high percentages of D,F,I,E, or Withdrawal grades among students. In its first year, CDA was a year-long professional development program for teams of faculty and program chairs, including stipends and funds for programs, course and curriculum design workshops, and collaboration around course design, assessment and outcomes. CDA was re-designed in 2016-17 to provide more program and course-specific support, focusing more intensively on course components, including high-impact practices such as transparent assignment design, adoption of open educational resources, and intensive writing and critical thinking instructional strategies. In its first year, program teams from Mathematics, Foreign Languages, Psychology and University Seminar participated in CDA, and introduced newly re-designed “gateway” courses in the 2016-17 academic schedule.

In 2017, the new process and course design guidelines were used by the second CDA cohort (seven faculty members) to redesign/design eight courses according to the modified course design process: General Biology (BI 101, 102, and 103), Principles of Biology (BI 211), American Criminal Justice System (CCJ 230), Introduction to Film Analysis (COMM 290), Fat Studies (GSWS 313), and ePortfolios (enrichment course). These courses will be launched in AY 2017-18. In addition, eight faculty participated in Transparent Assignment Design workshops and re-designed two assignments in each of their courses as part of SOU’s participation in a national research study.

COLLABORATION

There are a number of joint administrative, academic and governance efforts to maintain collaboration across institutions. Faculty at all public universities are represented at the Inter-Institutional Faculty Senate (IFS), which is made up of elected senate representatives from each institution. The IFS serves as a voice for all faculties of these institutions in matters of system-wide university concern. In addition, SOU engages in a number of collaborative initiatives with other universities and partners, as indicated below (*P* indicates Participation, N/P indicates Non-Participation):

Table 5: Southern Oregon University Collaborative Initiatives Participation

Other University Collaborations	University Response
Public University Councils:	
Presidents Council	P
Provosts Council	P
Vice Presidents for Finance and Administration (VPFAs)	P
General Counsels (GCs)	P
Public Information Officers (PIOs)	P SOU's vacant PIO position was filled on Oct. 17, 2016. Expectations for position are the same as prior incumbent and include ongoing attendance in scheduled meetings of PIO Officers
Legislative Advisory Council (LAC)	P
Cooperative Contracting (<i>note: taking part in State contracts</i>)	P Limited to an agreement between PSU and SOU for high level review of contracts.
Capital Construction Services	P
OWAN	If "OWEN" network then this has been subsumed within NERO, if "OWAG" then NP since OWAG is a financial data warehouse used by USSE.
NERO Network	P
RAIN	N/A SOU understands this to be available only for UO and OSU.
Orbis Cascade Alliance	P
ONAMI	N/A SOU understands this to be available only for UO, OSU, PSU, and OHSU.

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SHARED FACILITIES

- 1) Southern Oregon University entered into a facility sharing agreement with Rogue Community College upon completion of the capital construction project called the Higher Education (HEC) Building in 2008. The facility, located in Medford, includes teaching classrooms, specialty classrooms, presentation halls, and teaching computer labs. An example of cooperation and collaboration between two institutions, the HEC is a model of environmental stewardship having received the U.S. Green Building Council award's platinum certificate in the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) program, the first Platinum LEED building within Oregon public universities.
- 2) The Southern Oregon University campus includes the Oregon Health & Sciences University's School of Nursing in Ashland. Three pathways are offered to OHSU students to complete their bachelor of science with a major in nursing exist and include: 1.) the Oregon consortium for nursing education or OCNE, 2.) a three year undergraduate nursing program, 3.) and an accelerated bachelor for those with an undergraduate degree in another field and as associate degree in nursing from an OCNE community college.

STAFF TUITION BENEFIT

Employees and their dependents at Southern Oregon University, Rogue Community College (Grants Pass/Medford area), and Klamath Community College (Klamath Falls) can all participate in a reduced tuition agreement between the three institutions, a program that was modeled after the original public university's staff tuition benefit.

TRANSFER ARTICULATION AGREEMENTS

Southern Oregon University has very detailed transfer articulation agreements with 12 community colleges in Oregon and which include 39 different programs. Cooperating institutions include: Rogue Community College, Klamath Community College, Central Oregon Community College, Chemeketa Community College, Clackamas Community College, Clatsop Community College, Lane Community College, Linn-Benton Community College, Mount Hood Community College, Portland Community College, Southwestern Community College, and Umpqua Community College.

PATHWAYS

One area of collaboration that is of some concern, both in Oregon and nationally, is student transfer success. The statutes outlining goals for transfer student success and cooperation between Oregon's higher education sectors (ORS 341.430 & ORS 348.470) are the framework for HECC's continued partnership with the seven public universities. Recent policy discussions between the institutions and HECC give this sustained work a renewed focus: more and better statewide data on transfer student outcomes and potential statewide solutions where persistent barriers exist.

Although Oregon has good state level policies and processes to ensure that students may apply credits earned upon transfer from community college to university (the Associate of Arts Oregon Transfer degree, for

example), research resulting from House Bill 2525 (2015) revealed that community college transfer students on the whole often face challenges in completing an intended major, which result in excess accumulated credits, increased tuition costs, and debt. Statewide, community college transfer students graduate with more “excess” credits than their direct entry counterparts. And despite the best efforts of advisors, faculty, and administrators, some students who complete statewide degrees such as the AAOT are ill-served if they transfer into certain majors. Credit requirements at the university level often change without notice, which can hinder community college students and advisors in effective degree planning.

Statewide, 41 percent of students entered who entered an Oregon public university in Fall 2017 did so from a community college or other transfer institution.⁶ Southern Oregon University (SOU) enrolled 46 percent of its students as transfers in that same period.

In the 2017 legislative session, House Bill 2998 passed, which required the Commission to work closely with both public universities and community colleges to create a new framework for statewide transfer, a Foundational Curriculum of at least thirty credit hours, and a process for the creation of Unified Statewide Transfer Agreements (USTA) in major fields of study to aid transfer students in moving more easily into university study, with fewer lost or excess credits.

SOU representatives have been advisors and participants to the HB 2998 implementation process, adding insight and value to the creation of a proposed foundational curriculum currently under review and the policy questions that have been generated by the bill and reviewed in the legislative report that will result.

Southern Oregon University maintains all of its transfer articulation agreements and links to its online course equivalency guides as a resource for advisors and incoming or prospective students. To keep these agreements relevant, it must maintain close contact with its community college partners to guarantee that students who follow these guides will have met all lower division general education and be eligible for admission to a particular major. For example, SOU and RCC hold an annual Articulation Retreat which brings together faculty and staff counterparts from both institutions to discuss curriculum and policy changes and/or requirements, and to explore ways in which this important partnership can be enhanced.

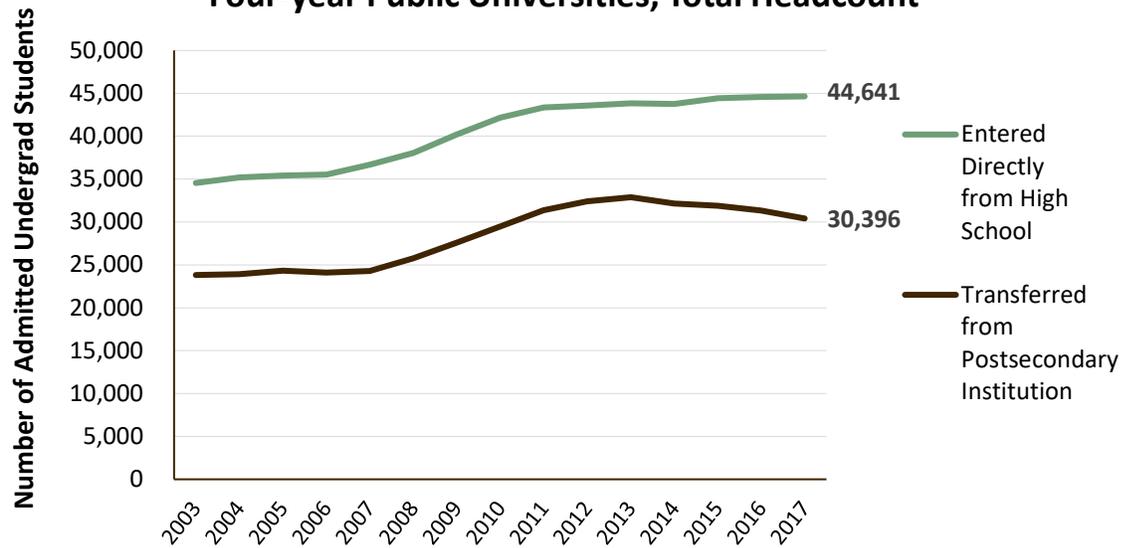
⁶ HECC Office of Research and Data, “University Student Data”
<http://www.oregon.gov/highered/research/Pages/student-data-univ.aspx>

Table 6: Admitted Undergraduate Enrollment by Entry Pathway Fall Fourth Week Enrollment, 2016

Year	Undergrad first time freshman		Undergrad Transfer		Total Admitted Undergrad enrollment*
	N	%	N	%	
2016	2,251	53.6%	1,949	46.4%	4,200
2017	2,312	54.5%	1,931	45.5%	4,243

* Excludes graduate enrollment, non-admitted undergraduate enrollment, and post-baccalaureate enrollment.

Transfer Enrollment and Direct High School Enrollment at Four-year Public Universities, Total Headcount



Source: HECC Office of Research and Data 2017

SHARED ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

Southern Oregon University also engages collaboratively in a number of administrative services with other universities and partners, as indicated in the table below. (P indicates participation; NP indicates)

Table 7: Shared Administrative Services

Provider	University Response
University Shared Services Enterprise (USSE, hosted by OSU)	
Financial Reporting	P
Capital Asset Accounting (currently only OIT)	N/P SOU occasionally utilized the services within the Capital Asset Accounting office when it was coordinated by the OUS. Upon dissolution of the system, SOU decided that these needs and duties would be subsumed internally. In fiscal year 2016 there has been approximately 0.1 FTE of a financial analyst's position that was dedicated to this increased effort.
Payroll & Tax Processing (includes relationship w PEBB, PERS/Federal retirement*)	P
Collective Bargaining *	P
Information Technology/5 th Site	P
Treasury Management Services:	
Legacy Debt Services-Post Issuance	P
Tax Compliance	P
Legacy Debt Services-Debt Accounting	P
Non-Legacy Debt Services	P
Bank Reconciliations (and other ancillary banking services) ²	P
Endowment Services	P
Other Miscellaneous Statements of Work:	
Provosts Council Administrative Support	P
Legislative Fiscal Impact Statement Support	P
Risk Management Analyst (TRUs only)	N/A SOU understands this position within Shared Services to be non-existent.
Public University Fund Administration ³	P

Southern Oregon University	
Retirement Plans *	
Legacy 401(a) Plan	P
Legacy 403(b) Plan	P
Optional Retirement Plan (ORP)	P
Tax-Deferred Investment (TDI) Plan	P
SRP Plan	P
Public University Risk Management and Insurance Trust (Risk Management)	P

Stemming from the passage of SB 270 and the University Shared Services Workgroup of 2013, as well as subsequent legislation found in ORS 352.129, the seven public universities created the University Shared Services Enterprise (USSE), a service center hosted by Oregon State University. USSE offers a fee for service model for many back-office functions previously offered by the OUS Chancellor’s Office. ORS 352.129 mandates participation by the independent universities in certain services offered by USSE until July 1, 2019. These mandated services include group health insurance, a select set of group retirement plans, and collective bargaining. All universities, including SOU, continue to participate in these mandated services.

FINANCIAL METRICS

This section of Southern Oregon University’s evaluation includes an overview of key high-level financial ratios which are viewed as “industry standard” metrics for understanding the strength of a public institution’s balance sheet and its operating performance. These ratios cannot be viewed in isolation from each other, or as a single snapshot in time, but as a continually unfolding story. Like any entity, Southern Oregon University’s ability to fulfill its mission is dependent on its long-term financial health. The financial ratios examined in this section provide information on the financial flexibility possessed by the institution at the balance sheet date and yearly operating results compared to the size of the enterprise. Both types of measures should be understood in the context of the institution’s overall strategy and its capacity to effectively execute on that strategy.

Standard benchmarks for each ratio are presented alongside calculated ratios for the institutions. These benchmarks are for demonstration purposes only. It is important to recognize the best comparison in assessing financial stability for an institution may not be peer institutions or national benchmarks, but may be a comparison to the institution itself over time.

In some cases, the effort of tracking institutional financial stability through ratios is complicated by changes in accounting standards and practices. For example, effective in the 2014-15 fiscal year (FY 15), Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) Statement No. 68 attempts to improve pension-related accounting and financial reporting. This change in the presentation of pension-related financial information impacts all of the ratios used in this evaluation. As such, the ratios are presented in two different ways: inclusive of the impacts of GASB 68 and exclusive of those impacts.

The following narrative focuses on the ratios provided by SOU to the HECC both with and without GASB 68. Ratios without GASB 68 are presented for reference at the end of this section:

SOUTHERN OREGON UNIVERSITY RATIOS WITH GASB 68				
Ratio	FY 15	FY 16	FY 17	Benchmark
Viability Ratio	29.00%	19.00%	21.00%	>125%
Primary Reserve Ratio	18.80%	9.20%	10.50%	>40%
Net Operating Revenues Ratio	-2.00%	-14.70%	-5.40%	>4%
Return on Net Assets Ratio	32.40%	88.40%	11.20%	>6%
Debt Burden Ratio	4.10%	3.60%	4.10%	<5%

The viability ratio measures one of the most basic elements of financial health: expendable net assets available to cover debt should the institution need to immediately settle its obligations. Ideally, an institution would have enough expendable resources immediately available to more than cover debt. SOU’s viability ratio has declined from FY 15 to FY 17 and is well short of this capability. Creation of additional debt could slow progress on this improving metric and, therefore, should be carefully considered and monitored by the institution.

The primary reserve ratio compares expendable net assets to total expenses, providing a snapshot of how long the institution could continue operations without the ability to generate revenues from those continuing operations. A trend analysis of the primary reserve ratio indicates whether an institution has increased its net worth in proportion to the rate of growth in its operating size. SOU’s primary reserve ratio declined sharply from FY 15 to FY 16 but stabilized in FY 17. The most significant factor in this decline is the changes required by GASB 68. According to SOU’s audited financial statements, GASB 68 resulted in stated expenditures 10.1% higher in FY 16 and 3.5% higher in FY 17 than would have been the case without GASB 68, due to its requirement that institutions recognize their significant future pension obligations as they are incurred. In fact, were it not for GASB 68, SOU’s primary reserve ratio would have grown over the past three years, although it would still be well short of the benchmark. Still, given that the “GASB 68 effect” is due to future pension costs associated with current activities, an institution that perpetually has a primary reserve ratio this low and so significantly impacted by GASB 68 may face significant cost pressures from pension expenses in the future, resulting in limited flexibility to make strategic operating investments or to fully fund operations.

The net operating revenues ratio indicates whether total operating activities for the fiscal year generated a surplus or created a deficit. It attempts to demonstrate whether an institution is living within its available resources. SOU’s net operating revenues ratio has declined since FY 15 and they have posted an operating loss the past two years, although the loss slightly decreased from FY 16 to FY 17. As with the primary reserve ratio, the extent of both this loss and this trend is substantially due to the impact of GASB 68 as although the institution would have posted operating losses from FYs 15-17 without the impact of GASB 68, these losses would have been decreasing, and for FYs 16 and 17 smaller than with the impact of GASB 68, over that time. Regardless, continuing negative operating revenues ratios may indicate that an institution does not currently have capacity to develop a stronger fund balance or make strategic operating investments without the use of existing fund balance, expense reductions, or revenue enhancements due significantly to the future pension costs highlighted by GASB 68.

The return on net assets ratio demonstrates whether an institution is financially better off than in previous years. It shows an institution’s total economic return. A positive return on net assets ratio means an institution is increasing its net assets and is likely to have increased financial flexibility and ability to invest in strategic priorities. A negative return on net assets ratio may indicate the opposite, unless the negative ratio is the result of strategic investment in strategies that will enhance net assets in the future. SOU showed a dramatic increase in its return on net assets ratio in FY16, primarily derived from accounting changes, which therefore does not allow for comparison to prior years. Specifically, debt associated with Article XI-G, Article XI-Q, COPs, and lottery bonds were shifted off of SOU’s balance sheet to the State of Oregon due to the reorganization of the former Oregon University System, dramatically improving SOU’s return on net assets for FY16. SOU’s return on net assets ratio remained above the benchmark for FY 17, indicating that SOU may have increased financial flexibility in future years should this trend continue.

Debt burden ratio demonstrates two factors: the extent to which an institution has used borrowed funds to finance its mission; and the relative cost of institutional borrowing to total operating expenditures. SOU’s debt burden ratio is well below the standard benchmark of 5% over the last three years. This indicates that debt is not being overly relied upon to finance SOU activities and that the cost of debt is at a manageable level. The ratios presented in the table below reflect financial statements excluding the impact of GASB 68. They are provided for reference:

SOUTHERN OREGON UNIVERSITY RATIOS WITHOUT GASB 68				
Ratio	FY 15	FY 16	FY 17	Benchmark
Viability Ratio	34.00%	43.00%	52.00%	>125%
Primary Reserve Ratio	20.60%	22.40%	26.30%	>40%
Net Operating Revenues Ratio	-9.10%	-4.80%	-2.10%	>4%
Return on Net Assets Ratio	14.90%	100.00%	12.70%	>6%
Debt Burden Ratio	3.80%	4.00%	4.30%	<5%

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The Boards of Trustees at each public university and their respective university constituents are continuing the process of developing effective working relationships. The Commission continues to recommend that the areas that all Boards should be attentive to include timing and access, for example not scheduling meetings during exams, or when classes are not in session; and encouraging feedback by making an effort to allow non-board members to weigh in early on in the meetings rather than having to sit out the whole meeting. At SOU, the Board of Trustees and faculty continue to work on joint understandings of appropriate access.

The Board of Trustees of Southern Oregon University held meetings on the following dates:

September 15, 2016

October 21, 2016

January 20, 2017

April 21, 2017

June 16, 2017

In compliance with ORS 352.025(1)(a) the board provides public notice of agenda and meetings in the following ways: public notice, agenda, and full meeting materials are posted in advance of each meeting on the SOU's governance website. Public notices of meetings, including agenda topics, are distributed directly to SOU employees, SOU students, as well as members of the public and the media (including those who request individual receipt).

Regular, special and emergency meetings of the board and its committees are duly noticed and held in compliance with public meetings and public records laws. All meetings are open to the public except for those portions allowed by law to be held in executive session. Materials for meetings are posted online and are available to the public at the time they are made available to trustees. Copies of the agenda are available in the meeting for members of the public. Regular meetings of the full board are live-streamed through the SOU website (see the website: sou.edu). Audio recordings of all meetings of the board and its committees are available upon request. Requests for recordings, documents and copies of meeting materials are honored and made available to requestors. The board office complies with public records requests in coordination with our public records office, led by SOU's general counsel, which processes these requests in compliance with public records laws. The board adopted bylaws on January 30, 2015 and can be found on the board's website: <http://governance.sou.edu/>

On January 30, 2015, the board adopted a policy outlining its delegated and retained authorities for budget; tuition and fees; business and administrative affairs; transactions; academic affairs; and gifts of a certain size, scope, length, or obligation.

The board maintains a consistent focus on the short - term and long - term health of the institution. The full board and appropriate committees of the board receive regular reports and/or make decisions on academic programs, finances, treasury activity, business services; investment activity; capital projects, facilities; internal audit; external audit; academic affairs; student affairs; and university priorities. The board monitors, provides

guidance on, and adopts the operating and capital budgets for the university; establishes tuition and fees; and approves debt instruments and bonds in accordance with the board's Statement on "Delegation of Authority.

In 2016, the board hired an internal auditor to provide independent, objective assurance and consulting services to add value, support accountability, and improve operations through a systematic, disciplined approach to evaluating and improving the effectiveness of management's risk management, internal control, and governance processes. The board adopts an annual internal audit plan to seek assurance regarding the adequacy and effectiveness of management's governance, risk management and control processes including annual assessments of management's control environment and management's control of fraud risk; and to improve compliance, internal control, and risk management practices. The internal auditor also monitors SOU's fraud, waste, and abuse hotline and performs independent investigations. The internal auditor reports to the board.

Regarding its own operations, the board holds strategic retreats and has established an evaluative tool to assess its own operations and effectiveness, in accordance with governance best practices.

On April 15, 2016, in its "Resolution: Process for Establishing Tuition and Fees," the board established such a process. This resolution can be found on the board's [website](#).

The board selected a new president for the university, Dr. Linda Schott, on June 13, 2016.

On January 20, 2017, the board adopted a policy on the evaluation of the university president. In accordance with this policy, the board conducted an annual assessment of the president following the conclusion of the 2016-17 academic year.

The board was scheduled to adopt a new mission statement on November 16, 2017 and will forward this to HECC following the board's action.

Following the board's approval, the AY 16-17 program changes forwarded to HECC were the Master's in Outdoor Adventure and Expedition Leadership, which HECC approved on April 13, 2017, and the Bachelor of Arts/ Bachelor of Science in Healthcare Administration, which HECC approved Aug. 10, 2017.

Southern Oregon University complies with ORS 352.025(2)(c). Additionally, all new contracts and legal transactions are reviewed by the university's legal counsel to ensure compliance. SOU has not acquired title to additional real property since July 1, 2015.

Due to the number of properties controlled by the university, individual properties are not listed herein.

CONCLUSION

This report is guided by Oregon Revised Statute (ORS) 352.061 which requires that the HECC report on the university's achievement of outcomes, measures of progress, goals and targets; assess the university's progress toward achieving the mission of all education beyond high school, described in the 40-40-20 goal; and assess how well the establishment of its governing board comports with the findings of ORS 352.025. This report relies heavily on regularly-conducted academic accreditation reports and the self-assessments prepared for these accreditation reviews, as well as on state and federal data. The contents of this report signal areas of alignment with the HECC Strategic Plan, which in turn supports the objectives of higher education for the State of Oregon.

The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) last affirmed accreditation for SOU in February 2017 following its Year Seven Evaluation. SOU has been addressing recommendations that resulted from that review and has submitted the next report in the accreditation cycle, the Year One Report (*Mission and Core Themes*).

SOU's enrollment of underrepresented students has been steadily increasing year-over-year, representing a 33% growth since 2011. SOU's enrollment has increased 20.8% since Fall, 2008, but is down 9.0% from its post-recession peak in 2011. Growth since 2008 has been driven by non-resident students, who are up almost 78% over that time period. Resident student enrollment peaked in 2011 and, despite an 18% decline from 2011 and 2016, remains 4.7% higher today than in 2008. In Fall, 2017 resident students account for roughly 68% of SOU's student body. SOU awarded 3.1% more degrees in 2016-17 than the prior year, continuing a growth trend that has increased by 5.7% since 2013. The most recent six-year graduation rate is 37.5% for Pell Grant recipients, 44.6% for underrepresented minority students, and 46.1% for all students. SOU is steadily increasing the number of degrees awarded to underrepresented minority students

SOU has been making progress in the enrollment of underrepresented students. In Fall 2016, 16.7% of total enrollment came from underrepresented student populations, and 36.9% of SOU's students were Pell Grant recipients.

Partly as a result of state funding cuts, resident undergraduate tuition and fees at the Southern Oregon University increased 68.8% in the last 10 years, including increases of 4.6% and 9.0% in 2016-17 and 2017-18 respectively.⁷ In 2017-18, tuition increased 9.0% and fees 8.8% for an overall increase of 9.0%.^{8,9} Resident graduate students have faced similar increases.

The total cost of attendance for students includes significant expenses associated with housing, food, transportation, and textbooks. Southern Oregon University estimates the average student budget for living expenses annually is \$17,461 for the 2017-18 academic year¹⁰.

⁷ Source: <https://inside.sou.edu/enrollment/tuitionandfees.html> as well as historical OUS tuition data. Defined to include full-time resident base tuition and all mandatory fees (including incidental fees).

⁸ This increase includes all tuition and mandatory fees (including incidental and other fees that are not subject to HECC review). As a result of the increase in the PUSF from the GRB, SOU's tuition increase dropped from an original level of 12.0%.

⁹ A full-time resident undergraduate student (taking 45 credits per year or 15 credits for each of three terms) will be expected to pay \$7,427 in tuition and \$1,860 in fees during the 2017-18 academic year.

¹⁰ Source: <https://inside.sou.edu/enrollment/financial-aid/budgets/index.html>

In addition to need-based federal and state financial aid programs (Pell Grants and the Oregon Opportunity Grant), SOU students benefit from significant commitment of institutional resources to scholarships, remissions, and tuition discounts. Of SOU graduates who leave the university with federal loan debt, their average federally-backed debt load is \$23,492. According to the College Scorecard, 47% of all students have federally supported loans.

As noted at the outset, this report constitutes a benchmark against which to evaluate SOU's progress in the coming years. It does not strive to be a comprehensive evaluation of this complex and multi-faceted university; rather, it emphasizes several areas that are of particular importance to the HECC and to the State of Oregon today. In partnership with institutional leadership, legislators, and other stakeholders, the HECC will continue to consider modifications to this annual process and product in order to improve its usefulness to our universities and to the people of Oregon.

