

CITY OF ASHLAND

January 9, 2018

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

Dear Chair Bryant and Commissioners,

Please accept into the record this letter in support of Southern Oregon University and, in particular, its new vision, mission, values and strategic plan. As Mayor of Ashland, I can attest to the critical role SOU plays within the city, region, and state in by serving as a catalyst for economic, cultural, social, and environmentally sustainable development.

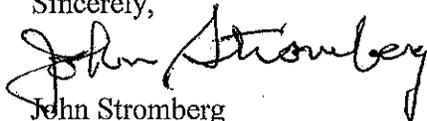
SOU is a key partner with the City of Ashland. As its largest employer, the University contributes to the success of the local economy by directly or indirectly supporting 1,767 jobs, and through its annual enrollment of more than 6,000 students who add \$30 million to the local economy. Over \$5.8 million alone is spent in Ashland on rental income and property taxes by SOU students and employees.

More than 1,000 SOU students earn degrees from SOU each year, becoming the leaders and innovators for employers throughout the local area and beyond. A survey of recent SOU graduates shows that 70 percent of those who had secured jobs were working in Oregon, two-thirds of which were employed in Jackson and Josephine counties.

SOU's presence also helps to attract and retain employers and employees to our area by providing numerous cultural amenities and opportunities for intellectual engagement, and through its ongoing commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusiveness.

I have been especially impressed with the way President Linda Schott has invited members from the local community to participate in shaping the University's future. SOU is on the move with an exciting new mission to become the educational provider of choice for all learners at every stage of their lives and careers. I look forward to continuing the City of Ashland's partnership with Southern Oregon University in serving the needs of the region and state.

Sincerely,



John Stromberg
Mayor

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