



Oregon State
University

Office of the Provost and Executive Vice President
624 Kerr Administration Building
Oregon State University
Corvallis, Oregon 97331

11 January 2018

Ben Cannon, Executive Director
Neil Bryant, Chair
Higher Education Coordinating Commission

Dear Director Cannon and Chair Bryant:

I am following up to add additional perspective on Oregon State University's position on the Willamette Promise program.

First, I offer a reminder of OSU's current policy, stated on its website. At OSU, Willamette Promise courses are currently transcribed as lower division elective transfer credit, except in cases where equivalency is established (e.g., WP Spanish courses, at present, with others under review). However, OSU academic departments may count a WP course as a transcribed OSU course upon further evaluation per student petition, once the student is enrolled at OSU.

I want to emphasize again that OSU does have a petition process in place for students who would wish to appeal for course-specific credit. This was communicated to Willamette Promise officials and Western Oregon University in our memo to those entities dated 26 June 2017. It has also been communicated to students currently enrolled at OSU who transferred in with WP/WOU credit. Indeed, a number of WP students at OSU have submitted such petitions. However, it is clear we need to re-double our efforts to communicate our policy to students and advisors. We are doing so.

Second, I want to reiterate that OSU believes accelerated learning programs are valuable and important to the access and affordability agenda in higher education.

Third, OSU also believes it is in students' interests that there be appropriate quality assurance behind accelerated learning programs, as with all other credit transfer programs. It is also in the interests of Oregon's public universities maintaining their accreditation, but our first priority is the proper education of students.

Fourth, the concern of our faculty with WP is not the concept; it is in the specifics of some of the execution, especially with respect to content equivalency and the current model of partial assessment. We have observed some outstanding outcomes from WP. WP/WOU officials invited two OSU students with those outcomes to the last HECC meeting. We have also observed poor outcomes, with students showing us WP work which does not meet standards for given college courses. It is this unevenness—and the message some potentially vulnerable students' are receiving about their readiness for advanced coursework—that concerns us. We do not believe the unevenness is a reason to reject the WP model in whole, but we do think there are ways WP/WOU could address the concerns. That is the basis of our conversations with WP/WOU.

Fifth, we're aware officials with WP/WOU believe those conversations are taking too long and that our faculty are scrutinizing the program unfairly. We're working to accelerate our efforts to engage

our faculty and propose solutions to WP/WOU. I'm pleased to report that we've had some very good conversations with WOU staff last week. We're optimistic about the path forward.

Sixth, we appreciate the potential importance of accelerated learning programs especially for students in smaller school districts with fewer resources, as well as economically disadvantaged students. However, we do not believe it is in disadvantaged students' interests to signal to them a level of preparation which they have not achieved and which will harm them as they progress into higher levels of study at public universities. If we believe a program's design may yield that outcome for some students—even if inadvertently—who would wish to transfer credit into Oregon State University, we have a responsibility to raise the concern. I want to emphasize that we also believe WOU shares a commitment to ensuring students earn college credit appropriately. The two universities simply differ on selected aspects of WP program design, differences I am hopeful will be sorted out soon.

Finally, OSU supports HECC staff's recommendation to make no change to the accelerated learning standards or requirements, as presented at the 14 December 2017 meeting.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Edward Feser". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with some loops and flourishes.

Edward Feser
Provost and Executive Vice President