

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

January 6, 2018

Dear Members of the Higher Education Coordinating Commission,

- I am the future of higher education: an individual with some college credit earned, but no degree. I am 52 years old and have had a 30 year career in healthcare information technology. Eventually I was hired into a non-profit organization and was passed-over for a management position due to my lack of degree.
- I have long wanted to earn a college degree but was not able to do that because of my work schedule and travel. This limited my ability to attend traditional classes during the day. Furthermore, the time it takes to complete a traditional degree was very daunting even as my children left home to attend college themselves.
- In addition to these challenges, a traditional college degree does not fit for me because the traditional single-discipline degree doesn't really relate to my work. I have over 30 years of experience in my field and although there is much I can still learn, I did not want to pay for classes that were not relevant to my current situation and maturity.
- While online degree programs offer good options for people like me, the face-to-face connection makes a huge difference in my ability to stick with the program.

When I discovered Southern Oregon University's Innovation and Leadership program, a college degree finally became possible for me. It is a path built for people like me, who have the ability and the skills but need a flexible, fast-paced curriculum that builds on the experience I bring into the classroom.

My experience in the INL program is a great example of SOU's commitment to being Oregon's "University for the Future." I urge you to strongly support Southern Oregon University new mission, vision and strategic direction.

Sincerely,



Paula Weldon

BS Innovation and Leadership 2017
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