

July 26, 2018

Neil Bryant, Chair
Ben Cannon, Executive Director
Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Commission
255 Capitol St. NE, Third Floor
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Commissioners and staff,

In June 2018, Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) staff presented a ranked capital project list for recommended inclusion in the 2019-21 agency request budget (ARB). It was developed using the capital rubric, which was amended and adopted by the Commission in March 2018. In addition, the evaluation process included in-person visits from HECC staff to each campus to tour the project(s) and receive more information from university staff, faculty members, and students.

Each university could find areas they believe the rubric falls short, whether it is in how to consider building a branch campus, how to fund critical demolition of unusable facilities, a lack of differentiation between leveraging of internal and external matching dollars, or insufficient weight given to research and innovation activity. Nevertheless, the HECC worked hard to set clear expectations from the outset. That allowed every university to propose capital projects based on guidance from the HECC's strategic plan and the state's educational attainment goals. Universities also selected projects for funding based on their own infrastructure needs, ten-year capital and master plans, enrollment trends, student populations, and public missions. Because each of these factors can differ from one campus to another, it is paramount that the HECC ensure a level playing field when evaluating, scoring, and ultimately voting to adopt a prioritized list.

We believe the Commission should adopt the staff recommendation. Detailed assessments of projects were delegated by commissioners to agency staff, who produced a list that reflects the HECC's priorities. While it is certainly the prerogative of the HECC commissioners to revise the rubric and invite new submissions from our universities, it is likely too late for the upcoming biennium given ARB deadlines. We would be happy to work with the HECC on a new rubric for future years if that is what the agency desires.

However, if the Commission does choose to re-order the list or re-consider prioritization of rubric categories, we would request that it do so only after engaging in further process to gather more information from all campuses or allow for resubmissions. That should be done in an equitable manner that ensures that every university has an equal opportunity to present and make its case for the viability and value of its project(s).

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Looking to future bienniums, we are supportive of a process that allows for a comprehensive review of the rubric in a transparent, collaborative way.

We are appreciative of the diligent work HECC staff put into assembling the rubric, assessing projects, and putting together a cogent recommendation for the Commission.

Thank you for the support of capital construction for universities. The state's recent investments in capital construction funding have been critical. The level of investment should not only be sustained—it should grow. Expanding the size of the pie will enhance outcomes for students and lead to discoveries and innovations that drive Oregon's economy.

Sincerely,



Michael H. Schill
President and Professor of Law

Office of the President

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