

**DRAFT Summary Points**  
**Western Oregon University Evaluation**  
**February 2022**

*ORS 352.061 requires the HECC to conduct annual evaluations of public universities in Oregon according to specific statutory criteria. Overall, the HECC's approach is to assess the university's contributions to statewide goals for higher education. We do not purport to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the university against its own mission. A summary of key findings follows:*

1. **Accreditation:** WOU is accredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU). NWCCU last reaffirmed WOU for accreditation in 2016 following its Year 7 (Mission Fulfillment and Sustainability) review. In affirming accreditation the NWCCU commended WOU for its commitment to student access and success and for its commitment to first generation and low-income students. The NWCCU also identified seven recommendations that needed to be addressed. WOU has addressed six of the seven recommendations over time, and a continuous improvement report is due with its spring 2022 Policies, Regulations and Financial Review and subsequent reports. In 2022-2023, the Year 7 institutional effectiveness self-evaluation report is due.
2. **Economic impact:** A 2019 Economic Impact study by ECONorthwest found that in 2017 WOU's economic impact to Polk County was \$223,587,508 and capital construction contributed an additional \$9,705,237 to the county. The addition of a new campus in Salem in 2019 will expand the economic impact of WOU.
3. **Student access and student success:** With 4,029 students in Fall, 2021, WOU's enrollment is currently the lowest it has been in over a decade. That decline has been particularly sharp since the HECC's last evaluation in 2019, falling 18.3 percent over the last two years. Declines have occurred among both the resident (in-state) and non-resident student populations. The number of underrepresented minority students enrolled at WOU continues to grow and now represents 29.8 percent of the university's total population— the largest percentage at any Oregon public university. Resident students account for 80.6 percent of the student population. WOU awarded 1,329 total degrees in 2020-21, 7.3 percent fewer than the previous year. The six-year graduation rate is xx.x percent for Pell Grant recipients, 42.2 percent for underrepresented minority students, and 51.7 percent for all students. WOU is recognized by Excelencia in Education as an Emerging Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI).
4. **Affordability:** Partly as a result of state funding cuts, resident (in-state) undergraduate tuition and fees at Western Oregon University have increased 50.0 percent in the last 10 years, to a total of \$9,768 for 2021-22. Most recently, tuition and fees increased 4.4 percent from 2019-20 to 2020-21, and an additional 0.7 percent for 2021-22. Resident graduate students have faced similar changes. Total cost of attendance for WOU students includes significant expenses associated with housing, food, transportation, and textbooks. WOU estimates the average student budget for living expenses annually, not including tuition and fees, is \$13,743 for 2021-22. The average debt among WOU graduates was \$21,716, compared to a statewide average of \$21,406, and 55 percent of WOU students had federally supported loans.
5. **Academic Quality and Research:** WOU contributes to a host of collaborative activities with other post-secondary institutions, including a decade-long dual enrollment partnership with Chemeketa Community College. The Bilingual Teacher Scholars Program works with K12 school districts and community colleges to address a critical and growing workforce need that is aligned with the priorities identified within the Oregon Student Success Act. In FY 2021, WOU submitted 68 external funding proposals. The proposals were led by 39 different faculty and staff members from across campus and totaled just under \$23 million in requested funding. This is up from FY 2020, in which 55 proposals were submitted with close to \$20 million in requested funding. FY 2021 WOU proposals are faring well; as of January 14, 2022, 41 of the 68 proposals have been funded totaling close to \$11.7 million in new awards.
6. **Collaboration:** WOU contributes to a host of collaborative activities with other post-secondary institutions, including a decade-long dual enrollment partnership with Chemeketa Community College and is the first public university in Oregon initiating and leading the WICHE Passport Initiative. WOU's Willamette Promise program served 2,645 high school students in 2017-18. The Bilingual Teacher Scholars Program works with K12 school districts and community colleges to address a

critical and growing workforce need that is aligned with the priorities identified within the Oregon Student Success Act.

7. **Shared administrative services:** WOU participates in most of the services offered by the University Shared Services Enterprise (USSE).
8. **Financial Condition Analysis:** WOU has moved in a positive direction after a fairly unstable year in FY20. Even with the challenges of the pandemic continuing through this last year. Through WOU's current efforts to "right size" the institution, as well as the returning to in-person learning and auxiliary activities, WOU should be able to produce positive benefits for the institution. This is particularly important in a challenging fiscal environment and one where enrollment is expected to continue to decline. These efforts should be closely monitored and evaluated for their impact on the institution and its finances.
9. **Board of Trustees:** In 2021, the WOU Board of Trustees appears to have met its legal responsibilities for providing public notice, accessibility, and records. In 2021, the Board exercised many of the powers reserved for it under law, including presidential oversight, budget adoption, tuition adoption, debt issuance, and program approval (for HECC consideration). Beginning July 1, 2021, Dr. Jay Kenton was hired by WOU's Board of Trustees to serve an Interim President through the 2021-22 academic year.