



March 23, 2018

Neil Bryant, Chair
Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Commission
255 Capitol Street NE, Third Floor
Salem Oregon 97310

Chair Bryant:

In our March 13, 2018 letter, we offered several suggestions about the proposed capital rubric. We reaffirm those observations, and agree with our colleagues from Portland State University and the University of Oregon that substantial changes to the rubric should come only after the engagement of an inclusive, transparent process.

Even with the current rubric, we urge the HECC to commit to a fully public and transparent capital scoring process including scoring sheets for each project made publicly available prior to any decision regarding the ranking of a capital project or the inclusion of the project in the consolidated budget request sent to the Governor. We also must reiterate that capital repair and renewal is the number one priority and, in addition to a reimagined Section C and D to the current capital rubric proposal, the foundation could be set for a rational capital allocation process that runs in concert with effective stewardship of state assets.

We note that the Oregon Council of Presidents February 22, 2018 letter regarding the capital requests in the 2018 Oregon Legislative Assembly was included in the docket materials. We are concerned how this may be read as applying to the 2019 capital rubric. This letter was conceived in a particular environment after much internal discussion. It, in no way, should be read to mean that the TRU institutions support adding a separate track for Oregon State University's branch campus in Bend. The letter states: "We have come to an understanding on the values and many of the parameters guiding the above projects as well as future capital investments at the universities. Based on the above understanding, we stand together today, to support investment in the four projects referred to in this letter..." (Emphasis added). We stand by the letter and at the same time, we do not support an eighth line for the branch campus.

Proponents of a separate line item for OSU's Bend campus have suggested the past dictates how it should be handled in the future. With transformative change in higher education governance accomplished by Senate Bill 270 in 2013, and the many significant changes in higher education including shifting delivery modalities, it is prudent and necessary, given limited public resources, to examine how narratives of the past are relevant to Oregon's future.

With regard to the narrative that the "State" created the Bend branch campus: the Oregon Legislature did not create a branch campus. The former Oregon State Board of Higher Education—not the Legislature—selected Oregon State University to shepherd a four-year degree completion program in Central Oregon in conjunction with Central Oregon Community



degree completion program in Central Oregon in conjunction with Central Oregon Community College as an efficient 2+2 program. The Board then requested funding from the legislature to support this activity; approximately \$7M was awarded. There is a significant jump to make from past Legislature funding requests made by the former Oregon University System or Oregon State University, and public policy decisions to fund the build-out of an additional campus.

Finally, consistent with our request to consider the post-Senate Bill 270 landscape, we must request that a fresh examination of the data play a central role in public policy decisions. For example, while acknowledging undisputed population growth in central Oregon, according to the Oregon Department of Education (ODE), K-6 enrollments in the region's three counties (Deschutes, Crook, and Jefferson) are declining. The 2018 graduating classes are the largest expected *for the next twelve years*. In addition, although central Oregon has been referred to as an "education desert," the claim is contrary to data. Deschutes County has the third highest educational attainment rate in the state—with 32.8% of its population holding a bachelor's degree.

As presidents, we are all committed to the students and communities of this State. We do not dispute that there is a need for four-year degrees in central Oregon. We supported the measured growth of the branch with our signatures on the March 13, 2018 letter for a \$39M academic building for the branch campus. However, we believe that it is time to take a step back, collectively examine the past, and chart the future together, with aspirational goals, data, evidence, and collaboration. This cannot be accomplished if a branch campus receives a separate line item for scarce capital dollars. We urge no substantial changes to the capital allocation rubric, including but not limited to, the inclusion of any branch campus as a separate line in HECC's capital allocation rubric.

Thank you for your time and consideration. As always, we welcome any opportunity to speak with you about our universities and postsecondary education in our state.

Regards,

Dr. Rex Fuller, President
Western Oregon University

Thomas A. Insko, President
Eastern Oregon University

Dr. Nagi Naganathan, President
Oregon Institute of Technology

Dr. Linda Schott, President
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