HIGHER EDUCATION COORDINATING COMMISSION

2025 UNIVERSITY EVALUATIONS: **Western Oregon University** (ORS 352.061)



Source: Western Oregon University

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INTRODUCTION

This report is guided by Oregon Revised Statute (ORS) 352.061, which requires the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) to submit to the Legislative Assembly an evaluation of public universities listed in ORS 352.002. Each public university must be evaluated once every two years. The purpose of this 2026 report is to evaluate the contributions of Western Oregon University (WOU) to State objectives for higher education as articulated in statute and in the HECC 2024-2029 Strategic Plan.

The report relies on a combination of accreditation reports, self-assessments and framework responses submitted by WOU, and state and federal data. This is the sixth biennial evaluation of WOU. It builds on the descriptive benchmarks and findings in prior evaluations while incorporating academic-year 2023-24 and 2024-25 data, Fall 2025 enrollment information, and more recent accreditation or financial developments when they materially affect the Commission's assessment.

The evaluation signals areas of key interest to HECC that support Oregon's higher education objectives: student success and completion; access and affordability across socioeconomic, racial/ethnic, and regional groups; academic quality and research; financial sustainability; economic and workforce contributions; and continued collaboration across institutions. It also reviews the work of the university's governing board under the criteria set forth in ORS 352.025. The report is not intended to be a comprehensive institutional review against the university's own mission; that broader assessment is undertaken through institutional accreditation and other university processes.

Legislative Mandate

Passed by the Oregon Legislature in 2013, Senate Bill 270 established individual governing boards at the University of Oregon and Portland State University and created a path for Oregon State University to establish its own governing board. House Bill 4018 (2014) and Senate Bill 80 (2015) authorized independent governing boards at Western Oregon University, Southern Oregon University, Oregon Institute of Technology, and Eastern Oregon University and accompanied the dissolution of the Oregon University System.

In 2017, the Legislature amended ORS 352.061 to require HECC to evaluate each public university once every two years. ORS 352.061(2) requires the evaluation to report on institutional outcomes, measures of progress, goals, and targets; assess progress toward the statewide mission for education beyond high school; and assess university governing boards against the findings in ORS 352.025, which includes the following provisions:

- Provide transparency, public accountability, and support for the university.
- Remain close to, and closely focused on, the individual university.
- Do not negatively affect public universities that do not have governing boards.
- Lead to greater access and affordability for Oregon residents without disadvantaging Oregon students relative to out-of-state students.
- Act in the best interests of both the university and the State of Oregon as a whole.
- Promote the academic success of students in support of statewide postsecondary goals.

ORS 352.025 also recognizes that, even under independent governing boards, there are benefits to a coordinated public university system, including economies of scale and continued sharing of services. The Legislature retains responsibility for monitoring the success of governing boards and their stewardship of state assets.

Evaluation Process

HECC developed the university evaluation framework through a collaborative workgroup beginning in 2015. University provosts, faculty representatives, state staff, and other institutional stakeholders participated in defining the purpose, scope, structure, and data elements of the evaluation. The

Commission adopted the framework in September 2015 and has continued to refine the process as institutional and statewide priorities have evolved.

A balanced assessment of Oregon's public universities does not lend itself to a purely mechanical approach. HECC uses consistent statewide measures while also considering institutional mission, geography, program mix, student population, accreditation findings, financial context, and current conditions. The evaluation therefore integrates quantitative data with university narrative and documentary evidence to provide a focused assessment of each institution's contribution to statewide goals.

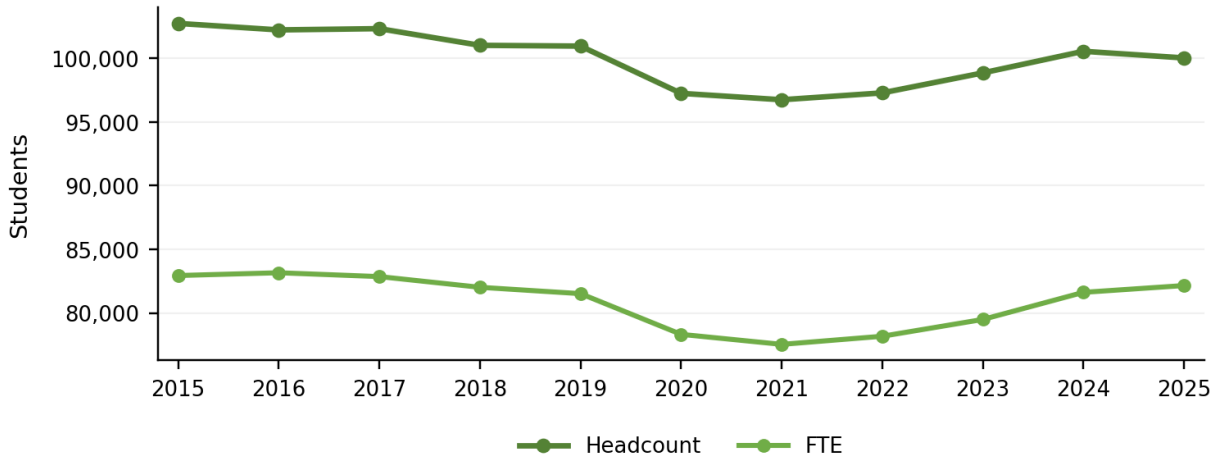
For this cycle, HECC requested two years of framework information and a current institutional narrative; supplemented the framework with centralized student data and financial analysis; and presented preliminary two-page summaries to the Commission in August 2026. The comprehensive evaluation incorporates subsequent institutional clarification and additional analysis. Where a university's data or narrative uses a definition that differs from a HECC measure, this report relies on the definition identified in the source and avoids treating unlike measures as directly comparable.

Statewide Context

Oregon's public universities operate under independent governing boards while remaining part of a coordinated statewide higher education system. The institutions share many of the same pressures: demographic change, uneven enrollment recovery, rising operating costs, student affordability, workforce demand, and the cost of maintaining academic and administrative capacity. Recent state investments have increased support for public universities and financial aid, but institutional sustainability continues to depend on the interaction of enrollment, tuition revenue, state funding, expenditure growth, and the ability to align programs and operations with changing student and workforce needs.

The technical and regional universities also participate in statewide academic coordination, transfer work, public-university councils, and selected shared administrative services. During the current cycle, EOU, Oregon Tech, SOU, WOU, and Portland State University received targeted state financial-sustainability funding for projects intended to reduce ongoing costs, increase revenue, improve recruitment and retention, and evaluate opportunities for shared administrative functions.

Figure 1: Oregon Public University Headcount and FTE Enrollment, Fall 2015-2025



Source: HECC Office of Analytics and Strategy 2025 Evaluation Data Request 2. Headcount and FTE totals include all Oregon public universities and OSU-Cascades.

Governance Changes

ORS 352.025 recognizes both the benefits of institution-specific governing boards and the continuing advantages of statewide coordination and economies of scale. Many administrative services that were once

centralized under the Oregon University System are now provided institutionally, through USSE, through inter-institutional agreements, or through outside vendors. The universities continue to collaborate through retirement-plan administration, collective bargaining, treasury and debt services, risk management, academic pathways, transfer policy, shared procurement, and other joint work.

Local Conditions and Mission[1]

Western Oregon University is located in Monmouth, approximately 15 miles west of Salem, with an additional presence in Salem. Founded in 1856, WOU is Oregon's oldest public university and has a long history in educator preparation while maintaining a broader portfolio of liberal arts, professional, and graduate programs.

WOU serves a student population that is predominantly Oregon resident and includes large shares of Pell Grant recipients, first-generation students, and students from historically underserved communities. The university has also been recognized as a Hispanic-Serving Institution, reflecting the changing demographics of its student body and its role in expanding access to higher education in the Willamette Valley and across Oregon.

WOU's 2024-2030 strategic plan provides the current institutional framework for Institutional Sustainability, Transformational Diversity, and Community Strength, During the evaluation period, the university continued work to stabilize enrollment, modernize administrative systems, strengthen transfer and dual-credit pathways, and address long-term financial pressures associated with a smaller enrollment base.

WOU's historical strength in educator preparation remains an important part of its statewide identity, but the university now offers a broader range of liberal arts, professional, behavioral-health, business, public-service, and graduate programs. Its location near Salem and partnerships across the Willamette Valley position the university to serve both traditional residential students and transfer or working learners.

The university's access mission is particularly visible in its student demographics, dual-credit reach, transfer pathways, and educator pipelines. Those strengths coexist with the operational challenge of serving students and communities with a substantially smaller enrollment base than a decade ago.

MISSION: Western Oregon University provides a personalized learning community where individuals experience a deep sense of belonging and empowerment.

Economic Impact

Western Oregon University (WOU), located in Monmouth, Oregon in Polk County, is the oldest Public University, first founded in 1856. It is located roughly 25 mins from the State Capitol in Salem, and roughly an hour south of Portland. WOU is the State of Oregon's first 4-year public university recognized as a Hispanic Serving Institution, with 27 percent of the student population identifying as Hispanic/Latino. Additionally, 41 percent of the student body identifies as students color, 50 percent are first generation students, and 84 percent are students who graduated in high school in the State of Oregon.

The 2026 Economic Impact Study prepared by Econsult Solutions demonstrates that WOU is one of the State of Oregon's most significant regional economic engines, generating lasting benefits for Polk County, the Mid-Willamette Valley, and communities throughout the state. As one of Oregon's three Regional Public Universities, WOU serves not only as an institution of higher education but also as a major employer, purchaser of goods and services, workforce development partner, and producer of highly skilled graduates who remain in Oregon to meet critical workforce needs.

[1] *Source: University mission, strategic-planning, and current evaluation materials.* https://wou.edu/planning/mission-vision-values-purpose/

Across Oregon, WOU generates an estimated $766.2 million in annual economic impact, the largest of the three Regional Public Universities. This impact supports approximately 4,330 full-time equivalent jobs and $220.3 million in annual employee compensation. These figures include the university's direct operations, capital investments, spending by students and visitors, and the increased lifetime earnings of WOU graduates who continue to live and work in Oregon. In addition, WOU's economic activity generates approximately $43.4 million in annual state and local tax revenue, illustrating that investments in Western Oregon University provide measurable returns for Oregon taxpayers.

For Polk County and the surrounding Mid-Willamette Valley, WOU serves as an anchor institution that strengthens the regional economy every day. The university's operational spending supports local businesses through payroll, procurement, and contracts while creating additional economic activity as employees and vendors spend throughout the region. Annual university operations alone generate $171.3 million in statewide economic impact and support approximately 1,370 jobs. Beyond campus operations, WOU's ongoing investments in facilities contribute another $16.1 million in annual economic activity, while spending by students, families, visitors, and attendees at university events adds an additional $88.8 million each year. These impacts extend well beyond the university campus, supporting retail establishments, restaurants, hospitality businesses, health care providers, construction firms, and professional service companies throughout the Mid-Willamette Valley.

Perhaps WOU's greatest long-term contribution is its role in developing Oregon's workforce. The report estimates that 35,824 WOU alumni currently reside in Oregon, with more than 25,000 participating in the state's workforce. Because of the education they received at WOU, these graduates earn an estimated $513.4 million in additional annual wages, generating $490 million in annual economic impact while supporting 2,340 jobs across Oregon's economy. Importantly, WOU graduates remain in Oregon at exceptionally high rates. Approximately 77 percent of bachelor's degree graduates and 75 percent of master's graduates are employed in Oregon one year after graduation, and nearly three-quarters remain in the state even a decade later. These retention rates exceed many peer institutions and reinforce WOU's role as a homegrown talent pipeline for Oregon employers.

The university's workforce contributions are especially significant in areas experiencing persistent labor shortages. The report identifies Western Oregon University as a critical source of educators, behavioral health professionals, public servants, and other highly skilled professionals who strengthen communities throughout Oregon. Across all Regional Public Universities, more than one-third of employed graduates work in education, while substantial numbers also enter health care, social services, and public administration. These graduates help address statewide shortages in teaching, behavioral health, public safety, and government service while supporting employers in both urban and rural communities. The report specifically identifies WOU as a critical talent pipeline for the Willamette Valley and the broader state, particularly through teacher preparation, public service, behavioral health, and transfer pathways that expand educational opportunity for Oregonians.

The study concludes that Western Oregon University delivers value far beyond its campus boundaries. Every investment in WOU creates economic activity, supports family-wage jobs, generates tax revenue, and develops the skilled workforce Oregon depends upon for future prosperity. For Polk County, WOU remains one of the region's most important economic drivers. For the Mid-Willamette Valley, it serves as a catalyst for business growth and community vitality. And for the State of Oregon, Western Oregon University represents a high-return public investment that strengthens economic competitiveness while expanding educational opportunity and preparing the workforce that will sustain Oregon's future.

Table 1: WOU Reported Economic Impact Measures

Measure	Reported Impact
Statewide annual economic impact	$766.2 million
Jobs supported statewide	4,330
Annual employee compensation	$220.3 million
State and local tax revenue	$43.4 million

Measure	Reported Impact
Operations impact statewide	$171.3 million
Alumni wage premium	$513.4 million annually
Economic impact from alumni wage premium	$490 million

Source: Econsult Solutions, Inc., 2026 Economic Impact Study, as reported by Western Oregon University in its 2024-25 evaluation framework.

Workforce and Alumni Contributions

WOU's economic-impact study attributes the largest portion of the statewide estimate to the increased earnings of alumni who remain in Oregon. The study reports more than 35,000 WOU alumni living in Oregon, more than 25,000 participating in the workforce, and a $513.4 million annual wage premium associated with their university education.

HECC employment data are consistent with the study's conclusion that WOU graduates remain in Oregon at high rates: 78.0 percent of resident graduates from the 2017-18 cohort were employed in Oregon five years after graduation. WOU's workforce contribution is particularly visible in educator preparation, behavioral health, public service, and other fields with persistent statewide shortages.

The 2026 study also identifies university operations, facilities investment, and spending by students and visitors as important sources of regional activity. WOU's position as a major employer and anchor institution in Polk County creates effects beyond the campus through purchasing, payroll, construction, events, and local demand for services.

Regional and Community Role

WOU's regional role is rooted in the Mid-Willamette Valley but extends statewide through educator preparation, dual credit, transfer partnerships, professional programs, and alumni employment. Its partnerships with K-12 districts, ESDs, community colleges, Tribal partners, and employers connect university resources to communities well beyond Monmouth and Salem.

ACCREDITATION

A comprehensive assessment of academic and institutional quality is provided through accreditation by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU), which accredits Oregon's public universities. Accreditation is an institution-wide peer-review process focused on mission fulfillment, student learning and achievement, institutional effectiveness, governance, resources, and continuous improvement. Accreditation applies to the institution as a whole and does not replace specialized professional accreditation for individual programs.

NWCCU's current seven-year cycle includes annual reporting, a Mid-Cycle Review, a Policies, Regulations, and Financial Review, and an Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness, with ad hoc reporting or visits when the Commission determines additional evidence is necessary. HECC uses accreditation findings as an external source of evidence while maintaining a separate statutory focus in this evaluation.

Western Oregon University is accredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) and has been continuously accredited since 1924. NWCCU reaffirmed WOU's accreditation in July 2023 following its Year Seven Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness. That review included two commendations and three recommendations concerning systematic evaluation and planning, financial planning and management, and use of current higher-education practices and technology.

WOU completed an Ad Hoc review and Financial Resources Review in 2025 and a Mid-Cycle Review and Financial Resources Review in Spring 2026. The university's current accreditation page lists a further Financial Resources Review for Spring 2027, a Year Six Policies, Regulations, and Financial Review in Spring 2029, and the next Year Seven Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness in Spring 2030. The current accreditation record continues to emphasize both institutional effectiveness and financial sustainability.

WOU identifies program accreditation or candidacy in educator preparation through CAEP and TSPC, rehabilitation counseling through CACREP, and the Occupational Therapy Doctorate program through candidacy with the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE).

Current Recommendations and Review Schedule

Table 2: WOU NWCCU Recommendations from the 2023 Year Seven Review

Area	Recommendation
Institutional effectiveness	Continue development of an ongoing and systematic evaluation and planning process that demonstrates continuous improvement and informs resource allocation and student-learning objectives.
Financial planning	Further develop and systematically use effective enrollment, financial-planning, and financial-management practices to support short- and long-term financial sustainability.
Institutional capacity	Deploy current higher-education best practices, including effective use of technology, to support organizational responsibilities and continuity of academic programs.

WOU's accreditation page documents additional financial-resource review activity in 2024, 2025, and 2026. The next scheduled Financial Resources Review is Spring 2027, followed by the Year Six review in Spring 2029 and Year Seven review in Spring 2030.

Specialized and Professional Accreditation

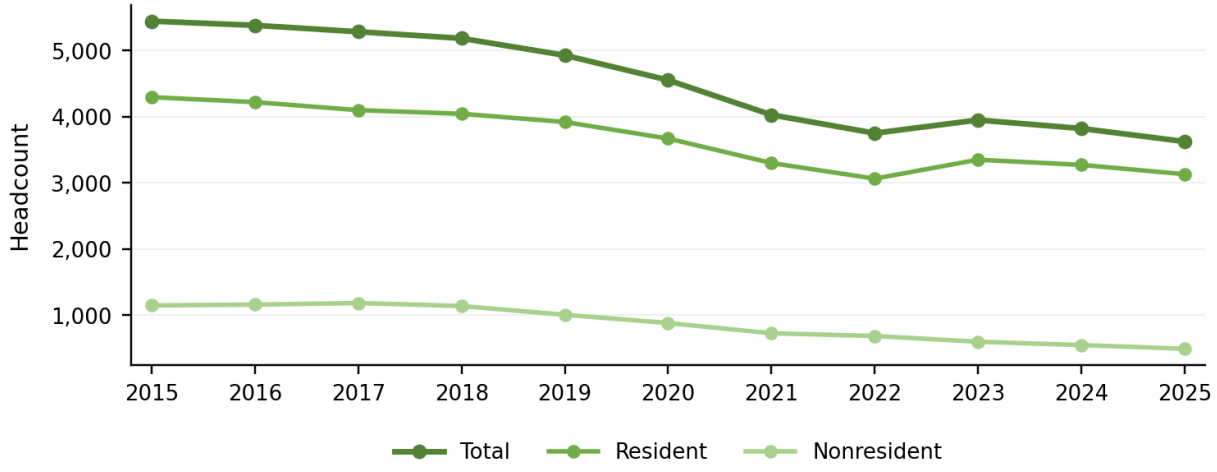
Program Area	Accreditor / Status
Educator preparation unit	Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP)
Teacher licensure programs	Oregon Teacher Standards and Practices Commission
MS Rehabilitation Counseling	CACREP
Occupational Therapy Doctorate	ACOTE candidacy

STUDENT ACCESS AND SUCCESS

This section tracks enrollment, student characteristics, retention, graduation, transfer outcomes, degree completion, and post-graduation employment. The primary sources are the HECC Office of Analytics and Strategy workbooks submitted for the 2025 evaluation cycle. The analysis uses multiple workbook tabs and time horizons to distinguish short-term movement from longer-term trends. Unless otherwise noted, fall enrollment is fourth-week headcount, and FTE follows HECC's standard credit-hour methodology.

Between Fall 2023 and Fall 2025, total headcount at WOU declined from 3,951 to 3,626 students, a change of 325 students (8.2 percent). Over the same period, FTE changed from 3,170.8 to 2,978.1. These measures are related but not identical; institutions with substantial dual-credit, part-time, online, or nontraditional enrollment can experience different movement in headcount and FTE.

Figure 2: WOU Fall Headcount Enrollment by Residency, 2015-2025



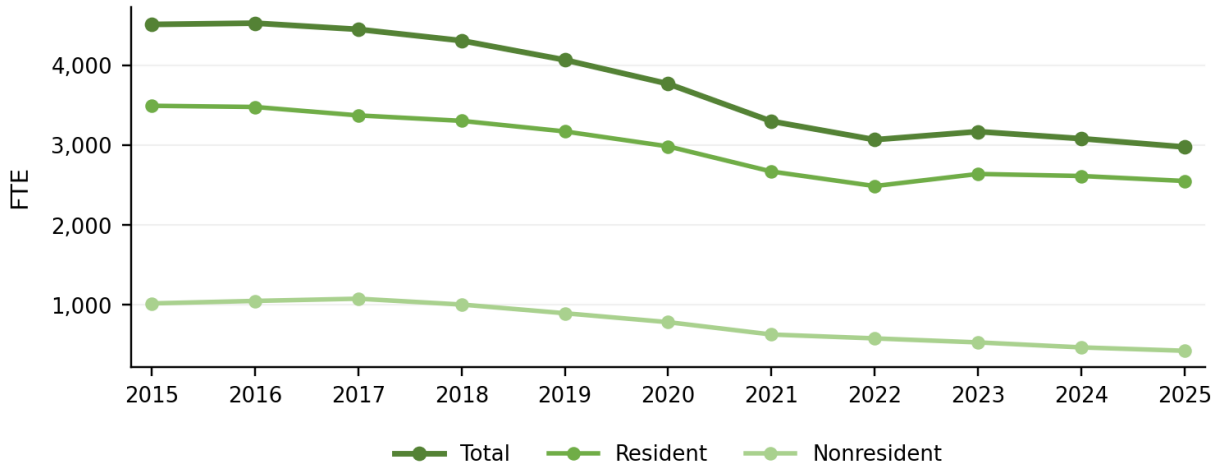
Source: HECC Office of Analytics and Strategy 2025 Evaluation Data Request 2.

Table 3: WOU Fall Headcount Enrollment by Residency, 2015-2025

Fall	Resident	Nonresident	Total
2015	4,296	1,149	5,445
2016	4,221	1,161	5,382
2017	4,100	1,185	5,285
2018	4,045	1,140	5,185
2019	3,921	1,008	4,929
2020	3,671	883	4,554
2021	3,301	728	4,029
2022	3,065	687	3,752
2023	3,351	600	3,951
2024	3,273	550	3,823
2025	3,132	494	3,626

Source: HECC Office of Analytics and Strategy 15-Year Headcount by Residency tab.

Figure 3: WOU Fall FTE Enrollment by Residency, 2015-2025



Source: HECC Office of Analytics and Strategy 15-Year FTE by Residency tab.

Current Enrollment Profile

Table 4: WOU Fall 2024 Enrollment Profile

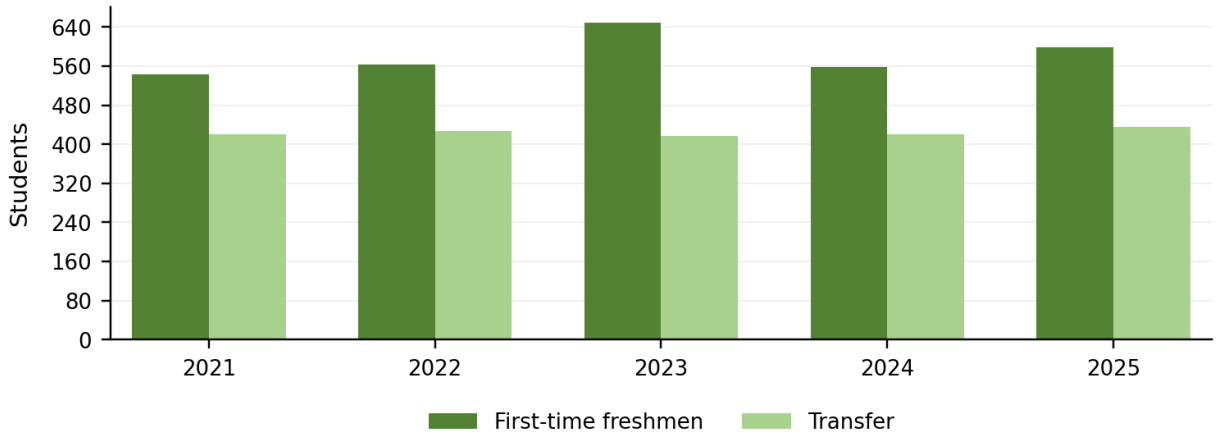
Measure	Headcount	Share of Enrollment
Resident	3,273	85.6%
Nonresident	550	14.4%
Full-time	2,921	76.4%
Part-time	902	23.6%
Undergraduate	3,268	85.5%
Graduate - Master's	537	14.5%
Graduate - Doctoral/Professional	18	0.0%
Pell Grant recipients	1,790	46.8%
Underrepresented minorities	1,325	34.7%

Source: HECC Office of Analytics and Strategy 2025 Evaluation Data Request 1, Current Year Data - Pell Update.

Newly Admitted Undergraduates

New student volume helps indicate the strength and composition of the future enrollment pipeline. The HECC workbook separates first-time freshmen from transfer students, allowing the evaluation to distinguish changes in traditional direct-entry recruitment from transfer enrollment.

Figure 4: WOU Newly Admitted Undergraduates by Entry Path, Fall 2021-2025



Source: HECC Office of Analytics and Strategy Newly Admitted Undergraduates by Entry Path tab.

Table 5: WOU Newly Admitted Undergraduates, Fall 2021-2025

Fall	First-Time Freshmen	Transfers	Total New Undergraduates
2021	544	421	965
2022	563	427	990
2023	649	417	1,066
2024	559	420	979
2025	599	436	1,035

Source: HECC Office of Analytics and Strategy 2025 Evaluation Data Request 2, Newly Admitted Undergraduates by Entry Path tab.

WOU's Fall 2023 headcount rebound did not continue through Fall 2025. The university remains well below its enrollment levels from a decade ago, and both headcount and FTE declined during the current two-year cycle. Enrollment stabilization therefore remains a central institutional and financial priority.

Enrollment by Race and Ethnicity

The current HECC framework identifies underrepresented minority students as students who identify as Black, Hispanic, American Indian/Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, or as two or more races including at least one of those categories. The table below shows recent movement across the same categories used in the evaluation workbook.

Table 6: WOU Headcount Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	Fall 2023	Fall 2024	Fall 2025	Change
Nonresident Alien	82	81	58	-24
American Indian/Alaska Native	42	50	48	+6
Asian	100	108	109	+9
Black	121	109	116	-5
Hispanic	911	936	950	+39
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	57	56	43	-14
White	2,331	2,195	2,035	-296
Two or More Races, URM	178	174	152	-26
Two or More Races, not URM	53	63	66	+13

Race/Ethnicity	Fall 2023	Fall 2024	Fall 2025	Change
Unknown	76	51	49	-27
URM subtotal	1,309	1,325	1,309	+0
Total	3,951	3,823	3,626	-325

Source: HECC Office of Analytics and Strategy Headcount by Ethnicity (10-year) tab.

Age and Student Level

The Fall 2025 age distribution provides additional context for institutional mission and modality. It is particularly useful for interpreting institutions with large dual-credit populations or substantial adult and graduate enrollment.

Table 7: WOU Fall 2025 Enrollment by Age

Age Group	Headcount	Share
Under 18	15	0.4%
18-24	2,650	73.1%
25-29	402	11.1%
30-35	232	6.4%
Over 35	327	9.0%

Source: HECC Office of Analytics and Strategy Fall Enrollment by Age and Student Level tab.

Retention, Graduation, and Transfer Outcomes

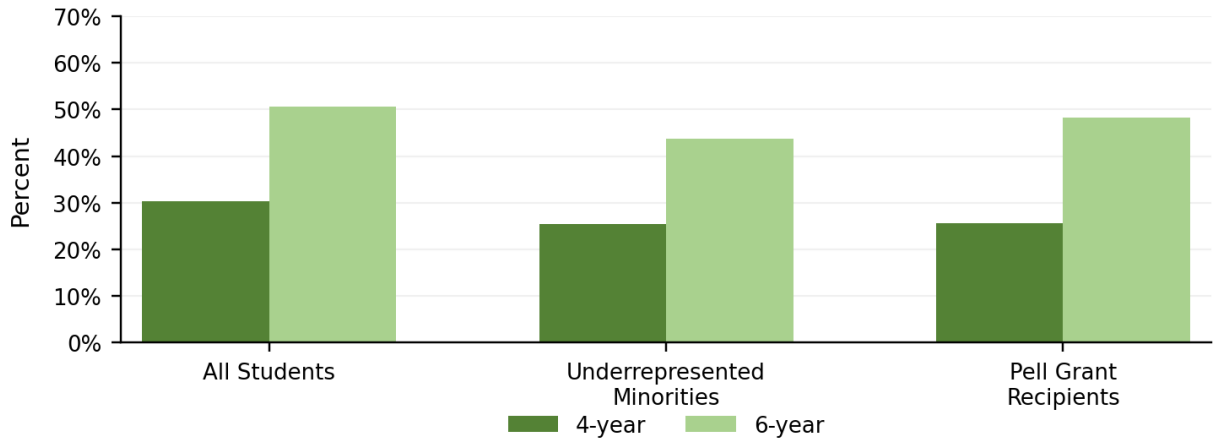
HECC's graduation-rate methodology includes students who begin at the institution and subsequently complete at another Oregon public university. Retention similarly includes students who remain enrolled at the original institution or transfer and enrolled at another Oregon public university in the following fall. These definitions are intended to capture statewide student progress rather than only institutional persistence.

Table 8: WOU Graduation Rates, Fall 2018 First-Time/Full-Time Cohort

Student Group	4-Year	5-Year	6-Year
All Students	30.3%	45.8%	50.7%
Underrepresented Minorities	25.4%	39.9%	43.8%
Pell Grant Recipients	25.6%	43.3%	48.2%

Source: HECC Office of Analytics and Strategy 2025 Evaluation Data Request 1, Current Year Data - Pell Update.

Figure 5: WOU Four- and Six-Year Graduation Rates, Fall 2018 Cohort



Source: HECC Office of Analytics and Strategy 2025 Evaluation Data Request 1.

Table 9: WOU Retention and Transfer Outcomes

Student Group	First-Year Retention - Fall 2023 Cohort	Transfer Graduation within Four Years - Fall 2018 Cohort
All Students	74.5%	73.4%
Underrepresented Minorities	74.5%	69.1%
Pell Grant Recipients	78.4%	69.8%

Source: HECC Office of Analytics and Strategy 2025 Evaluation Data Request 1.

For the Fall 2018 cohort, the six-year graduation-rate difference between all students and underrepresented minority students was 6.9 percentage points, while the difference between all students and Pell Grant recipients was 2.5 percentage points. Transfer graduation outcomes were generally closer to the overall institutional rate, illustrating the importance of examining direct-entry and transfer populations separately.

Degree and Credential Completion

Degree and credential completion is reviewed alongside enrollment because changes in completion volume can reflect both institutional performance and the size and composition of entering cohorts. The long-term workbook includes resident and nonresident completions by award type; the table below combines residency categories to show total awards.

Table 10: WOU Completions by Award Type

Academic Year	Certificates	Associate	Bachelor's	Master's	Doctoral/Professional
2021-22	166	0	1,011	168	0
2022-23	212	0	855	176	0
2023-24	209	0	799	167	0
2024-25	311	0	788	215	0

Source: HECC Office of Analytics and Strategy 2025 Evaluation Data Request 2, Degrees by Award Type (10-year) tab.

Figure 6: WOU Bachelor's and Master's Degree Completion, 2021-22 to 2024-25



Source: HECC Office of Analytics and Strategy Degrees by Award Type (10-year) tab.

For 2024-25, the current evaluation workbook separately identifies 788 undergraduate degrees and 215 master's degrees. Of the undergraduate degrees, 250 were awarded to underrepresented minority students and 421 to Pell Grant recipients.

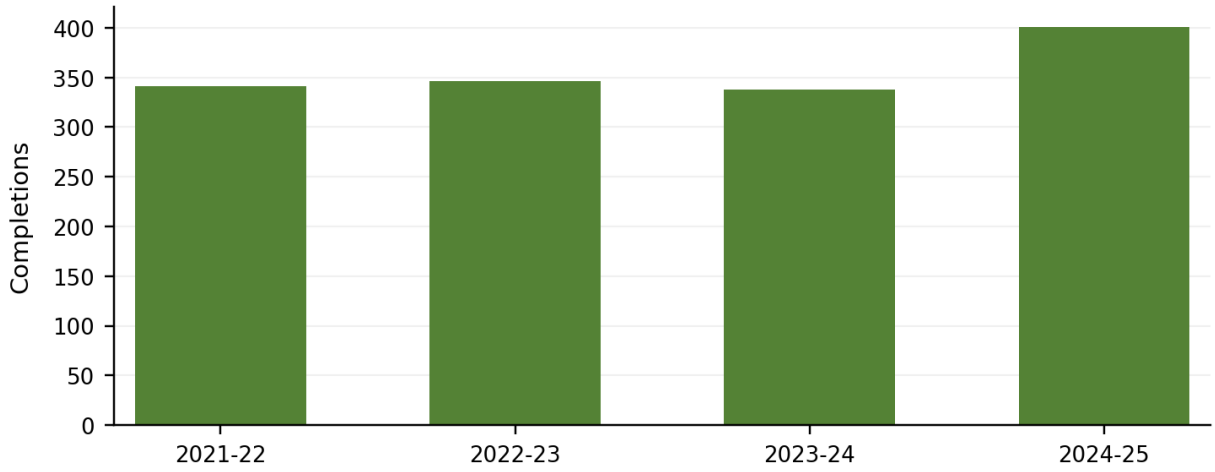
Completions by Underrepresented Minority Status

Table 11: WOU Underrepresented Minority Completions - All Award Types

Academic Year	URM Completions
2021-22	341
2022-23	346
2023-24	338
2024-25	401

Source: HECC Office of Analytics and Strategy 2025 Evaluation Data Request 2, Degrees by Race/Ethnicity (10-year) tab. URM totals combine the categories used in the HECC framework.

Figure 7: WOU Underrepresented Minority Completions, 2021-22 to 2024-25



Source: HECC Office of Analytics and Strategy Degrees by Race/Ethnicity (10-year) tab. URM totals combine the categories used in the HECC framework.

Employment in Oregon After Graduation

Five years after graduation, 78.0% of resident graduates from the 2017-18 cohort were employed in Oregon, based on matched HECC and Oregon Employment Department data. This indicator provides one measure of the institution's contribution to Oregon's workforce. It does not capture graduates employed outside the state, some self-employed individuals, or graduates continuing their education, and should therefore be interpreted as a state-employment measure rather than a comprehensive employment rate.

AFFORDABILITY

Affordability, more specifically the affordability rate, is a key performance measure used in tracking the factors that contribute to student attainment and equity in alignment with Oregon's higher education goals. As a result, it is a consideration in the university evaluation process. This section includes a discussion of student costs and provides information on the affordability rate over time.

Tuition and fee rates can vary based on several factors, including a student's academic year (or cohort), declared major, and residency. The governing boards have authority to set tuition and fee rates; however, they must seek HECC approval for any annual increase of greater than five percent for undergraduate, resident tuition and mandatory fees. Tuition and fee setting are complex, with ORS 352.103 laying out requirements for an annual process at each university that requires staff and student participation.

Table A shows the trend in undergraduate, resident tuition and mandatory fees for the past decade, unadjusted for inflation. This is for full-time students taking 45 credits over three terms in a given academic year. Differential tuition and course fees are not included. The average annual increase across all Oregon public universities over this period is 4.5 percent, with an average annual increase of 3.7 percent for WOU, which is the same as consumer inflation of 3.7 percent.

Table A: Undergraduate, Resident Tuition and Mandatory Fees (Full-time enrollment, unadjusted for inflation)

	Academic Year 2016-17	Academic Year 2025-26	Variance	Variance	Annual Growth Rate
WOU	$8,700	$12,087	$3,387	39%	3.7%
Statewide	$9,114	$13,582	$4,468	49%	4.5%

Source: HECC Office of Analytics and Strategy. Full-time represents 15 credits for undergraduates.

Universities establish a total cost of attendance, or sticker price, which includes tuition and fees, books and supplies, room and board, and personal expenses. During 2023-24, tuition and related fees made up 41 percent of the total cost of attendance on average. Table B shows the change in the total cost of attendance for full-time students over the past decade, unadjusted for inflation. The average annual increase across all Oregon public universities over this period was 3.4 percent, which is the same as the rate of consumer inflation.

Table B: Total Cost of Attendance (Full-time, unadjusted for inflation)

	Academic Year 2014-15	Academic Year 2023-24	Variance	Variance	Annual Growth Rate
WOU	$22,752	$26,741	$3,989	18%	1.8%
Statewide	$23,832	$32,292	$8,460	35%	3.4%

Source: Public University Data Dashboard as published by the HECC Office of Analytics and Strategy accessed January 13, 2026. Labeled as estimated cost of attendance for full-time.

For most students, the total cost of attendance may be partially offset by financial aid, including institutional remissions and waivers. As a result, many students pay less than the sticker price. Table C shows the change in the average net price for full-time students after accounting for public financial aid and institutional aid. The average annual increase across all Oregon public universities over this period was 3.0 percent, which is less than the rate of consumer inflation. An estimated quarter of students do not apply for financial aid, and an estimated one-third do not receive financial aid. Therefore, a fair number of students who do not receive need-based aid may experience a different net price than what is presented.

Table C: Average Net Price (Full-time, unadjusted for inflation)

	Academic Year 2014-15	Academic Year 2023-24	Variance	Variance	Annual Growth Rate

WOU	$14,008	$14,786	$778	6%	0.6%
Statewide	$14,484	$18,898	$4,414	30%	3.0%

Source: Public University Data Dashboard as published by the HECC Office of Analytics and Strategy accessed January 13, 2026. Labeled as estimated cost of attendance after public/institution aid.

This data also suggests the average discount to the total cost of attendance has grown slightly over time for all public universities from 39 percent to 41 percent from 2014-15 to 2023-24. The average discount rate for WOU increased from 38 percent to 45 percent from 2014-15 to 2023-24.

The affordability rate is defined as the percentage of students, overall and by race/ethnicity, whose expected costs are greater than their expected resources. A higher number, therefore, indicates lesser affordability. It is measured by comparing the cost of attendance at a college or university with the expected financial resources available for each student, including financial aid, the family's contribution, and an estimate of the student's earnings while enrolled. The cost of attendance data comes from the universities and includes estimates for the average full-time student for tuition and fees, housing, books, supplies, transportation, and personal expenses. The cost of attendance does not include expenses that some students will face, such as the cost of caring for children or other family members, health issues, and unexpected events.

Table D: Trend in Affordability Rate

	Statewide	WOU
2014-15	63%	60%
2015-16	62%	56%
2016-17	61%	55%
2017-18	61%	54%
2018-19	60%	53%
2019-20	57%	43%
2020-21	54%	39%
2021-22	47%	31%
2022-23	50%	35%
2023-24	45%	34%

Source: Public University Data Dashboard as published by the HECC Office of Analytics and Strategy accessed January 13, 2026.

Table D includes the trend in the overall affordability rate for all seven public universities and WOU specifically. This data comes from the Public University Data Dashboard available on the HECC's website. Within the dashboard, the affordability rate can be further explored by race/ethnicity, Pell recipient status, geographic origin (urban, rural, mixed), and gender. Over time, the affordability rate has improved in part due to increased public financial aid and increased institutional aid. Expanded federal supports during the pandemic had an impact for a few years after 2020.

ACADEMIC QUALITY AND RESEARCH

HECC relies on four broad areas to track academic quality and research at each institution: regular external accreditation reviews; evidence of systematic academic program and curriculum review; regular faculty evaluation and opportunities for professional development; and institutional research, scholarship, or grant activity. These measures are not a substitute for peer accreditation or discipline-specific review, but they provide consistent points of assessment across Oregon's public universities.

Academic Program Review and Effectiveness

WOU's Office of Academic Effectiveness supports program review, learning-outcomes assessment, and institutional effectiveness. Academic program and curriculum changes also move through faculty-governance structures. These processes provide the university with recurring opportunities to review program quality, student outcomes, and alignment with institutional priorities.

Faculty Evaluation

Faculty evaluation is governed by the 2024-27 WOUFT-WOU Collective Bargaining Agreement. Article 9 establishes policies, procedures, and timelines for evaluation. The collective-bargaining framework provides differentiated processes appropriate to faculty appointment type while maintaining expectations for teaching and professional performance.

Faculty Professional Development

Article 23 of the current collective bargaining agreement provides a co-investment model for faculty professional development. WOU reports that 85 percent of annual professional-development funds are distributed across bargaining-unit members without a separate competitive application process, with allocations for instructional and non-tenure-track faculty adjusted by contract FTE. Funds may roll over for up to two years and can support conference participation, workshops, research and creative activity, course reassignment, instructional innovation, and other professional development.

Research and Scholarly Support[2]

WOU supports scholarship through faculty development resources, library collections and databases, and sponsored-research support. Over the FY24–FY25 reporting period, Western Oregon University significantly expanded its sponsored projects portfolio, with total expenditures growing from $117,568.22 in FY24 to $296,632.38 in FY25—a 152 percent year-over-year increase. Across both fiscal years, federal awards served as the primary funding driver, representing 70.0 percent ($82,248.52) of total expenditures in FY24 and rising to 74.5 percent ($221,073.28) in FY25. Non-federal partnerships provided vital complementary support, contributing $35,319.70 in FY24 (30.0 percent) and $75,559.10 in FY25 (25.5 percent), demonstrating sustained collaboration with state, non-profit, and regional partners.

Activity across fields reflected both continuity and strategic expansion. Computer and Information Sciences led all discipline categories in both years, more than doubling its federally backed funding from $51,191.74 (43.5 percent of total expenditures) in FY24 to $123,613.87 (41.7 percent) in FY25. Non-Science and Engineering initiatives saw remarkable growth, rising from $5,611.93 (4.8 percent) in FY24 to $97,258.22 (32.8 percent) in FY25 through a strong mix of federal ($47,226.75) and non-federal ($50,031.47) funding. Geological, Atmospheric, and Ocean Sciences also expanded from $10,540.38 (9.0 percent) to $49,280.13 (16.6 percent), fully supported by federal grants. Meanwhile, Other Sciences generated $27,289.14 (23.2 percent) in FY24 and $26,480.16 (8.9 percent) in FY25, driven primarily by non-federal sponsorships, and Psychology contributed $22,935.03 (19.5 percent) in FY24 through federal support.

[2] *Source: Western Oregon University, Office of Sponsored Projects September 25, 2026 WOU Economic Impact Analysis - HECC Report.*

Together, these sustained and growing investments strengthen undergraduate research opportunities, elevate faculty scholarship, and amplify WOU's educational and economic impact across the region..

Academic Quality and Student Success

WOU's academic-quality work is closely connected to its access mission. Faculty and staff use program alignment, transfer maps, assessment, advising, and curricular pathways to reduce unnecessary credits and improve student progression. That work is consistent with the NWCCU commendation recognizing WOU's use of data and curricular alignment to support equitable student success.

Current Institutional Framework Evidence

Academic Program Review and Approval Processes

Western Oregon University maintains a systematic academic program review and approval process designed to ensure continuous quality improvement, curriculum currency, and alignment with regional workforce needs. Each established program undergoes a cyclical 7-year review—encompassing a departmental self-study, an independent external peer review, and a multi-year action plan monitored by academic leadership.

Parallel to this cyclical review, WOU's multi-tiered program approval pipeline—spanning faculty curriculum committees, the Faculty Senate, institutional deans, the WOU Board of Trustees, the Statewide Provosts Council, the Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC), and final authorization by the NWCCU—has expanded WOU's academic portfolio during the 2023–2025 cycle. A notable program addition is the new specialized applied Doctor of Occupational Therapy (OTD). Additionally, WOU introduced targeted career-aligned certificate pathways including certificates in Principal Licensure, American Sign Language, and Healthcare Administration.

The institution evaluates faculty using an identified faculty evaluation process.

Western Oregon University evaluates instructional quality and faculty growth through structured mechanisms defined in Article 9 of the WOUFT-WOU CBA (2024–27):

1. Evaluation Criteria: All evaluations assess performance across teaching effectiveness, scholarship/professional activity, and institutional service, with criteria weighted appropriately based on appointment type.
2. Non-Tenure Track (NTT) Procedures: Focuses on instructional delivery, student feedback, and classroom effectiveness. Annual and multi-year reviews provide structured pathways for contract renewal, promotion in rank (e.g., Senior Instructor), and continuous teaching enhancement.
3. Post-Tenure Review (PTR) Procedures: A cyclical 5-year evaluation framework for tenured faculty designed to maintain academic rigor, recognize long-term institutional contributions, and align ongoing scholarly and service goals with university priorities.
4. Administrative Support & Guidance: The Office of Academic Affairs maintains clear timeline portals, dossier guidelines, and review schedules to ensure procedural fairness and transparency for peer review committees and evaluating administrators.

Institution supports Faculty Professional Development

Faculty Development Funds are provided according to the WOUFT-WOU Collective Bargaining Agreement 2024-27 in Article 23. Here is information excerpted from CBA: Section 1. Faculty Development Funds. Faculty Development Funds are a co-investment the University and faculty make in the advancement of scholarship, creative activities, instruction and / or career development. Section 2. Equal Allocation of Funds. A. Beginning in the 2024/2025 academic year, 85 percent of each academic year's faculty development funds will be allocated equally across all members of the bargaining unit without member application or committee review. B. Funds for NTT/Instructional Faculty will be distributed proportional to current contract FTE to members with less than full-time (1.0FTE) appointments. C. Each faculty member's allocated funds will roll over for up to two years. For example, funds received in 2025/2026 may be used in 2025/2026, 2026/2027, or 2027/2028, but would not roll over into 2028/2029. D. Faculty may

use their allocated funds as they see fit to advance their scholarship, creative activities, instruction and/or career development, including through the pursuit of professional development opportunities. Funds are available to support scholarly and creative activities, including attendance at conferences, either as a presenter, in an official capacity, or as an attendee; professional development (e.g., training, workshops);research and major projects; course reassignment to work on scholarly or creative activities and; course reassignment to develop technologically innovative courses.

Sources: University 2024-25 evaluation framework; 2023 HECC university evaluation for continuing institutional processes; current institutional academic and accreditation materials. Historical quantitative values are not carried forward unless identified as current.

COLLABORATION

Oregon law and the university-evaluation framework recognize that independent governing boards do not eliminate the benefits of coordination across the public higher education system. Collaboration includes statewide councils and governance, transfer and dual-credit pathways, joint academic programs, research partnerships, workforce initiatives, shared facilities, and work with community colleges, K-12 schools, Tribal governments, local governments, nonprofits, and industry.

Statewide Transfer and Pathways Work

Transfer student success has been a sustained area of statewide policy and institutional collaboration. Oregon's public universities and community colleges work through the Transfer Council and related faculty and operational groups on common course numbering, Major Transfer Maps, general-education alignment, transfer policy, and implementation issues. The purpose of this work is to reduce unnecessary credits, improve transparency for students, and create more predictable pathways between institutions.

High-school-based college credit and other accelerated-learning programs are another area of shared work. Public universities participate in statewide review and coordination intended to ensure that college credit earned in high school is appropriately aligned, transferable, and supported by clear information for students. The scale of these programs differs substantially by institution and is important context for both access and enrollment data.

University presidents, provosts, finance officers, general counsels, public-information officers, faculty representatives, and other institutional leaders also participate in statewide councils and networks. These groups provide ongoing venues for coordination on legislation, academic policy, finance, transfer, collective bargaining, research, operations, and emerging statewide issues.

Willamette Promise

WOU participates in the Willamette Promise, a dual-enrollment initiative administered through the Willamette Education Service District. WOU's assessment-based learning model operates alongside Oregon Tech's sponsored dual-credit model, giving participating high school students access to a broader range of college-credit opportunities. WOU reports a flat annual student fee structure designed to keep participation costs low.

Community College Transfer Networks

WOU reports Degree Partnership Programs with Chemeketa, Clackamas, Linn-Benton, Portland, and Mt. Hood community colleges, as well as Direct Connect arrangements and more than 400 articulation maps. These partnerships are intended to reduce credit loss, support co-admission, and create clearer transfer pathways into upper-division study.

Educator Preparation Partnerships

WOU's College of Education uses partnerships with K-12 districts, Education Service Districts, and other agencies to address educator workforce needs. The Bilingual Teacher Scholars Program and related pathways are designed to diversify the educator workforce and support students moving from community-based or school-based roles into licensure programs.

Rural Partnership Pathways Program

The Rural Partnerships Pathways Program (RP3) partners with the Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians and regional ESDs to provide place-conscious, hybrid degree-completion and licensure pathways. The model is intended to reduce geographic barriers for instructional assistants and other rural educators seeking high-demand endorsements and teaching credentials.

Statewide Academic and Library Collaboration

WOU participates in the Transfer Council, common course numbering and Major Transfer Map work, public-university councils, and the Orbis Cascade Alliance. These structures support student mobility, shared academic resources, and coordinated policy implementation across institutions.

Statewide Collaboration Participation

Table 12: WOU Statewide Collaboration Participation

Collaborative Activity	WOU Response
Presidents Council	P
Provosts Council	P
Vice Presidents for Finance and Administration (VPFAs)	P
General Counsels (GCs)	P
Public Information Officers (PIOs)	P
Legislative Advisory Council (LAC)	P
Cooperative Contracting	P
Capital Construction Services	P
OWAN	N/P not indicated
NERO Network	N/P not indicated
RAIN	N/P not indicated
Orbis Cascade Alliance	P
ONAMI	N/P not indicated
Other	N/P not indicated

Source: University 2024-25 evaluation framework. P = participation; N/P or NP = non-participation where provided by the institution.

SHARED ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

Following dissolution of the Oregon University System, the seven public universities created the University Shared Services Enterprise (USSE), hosted by Oregon State University, to provide selected back-office functions on a fee-for-service basis. Participation requirements and service offerings have changed over time, and universities now use a mix of USSE, institutionally provided services, inter-institutional agreements, and external vendors.

Evolution of the Shared-Service Model

The prior statewide shared-services assessment documented a substantial contraction in USSE over the decade following the dissolution of the Oregon University System. In FY2015, USSE had approximately 32 staff and a $4.8 million operating budget, and universities used an average of about eleven services. By FY2025, USSE budgeted approximately 5.2 FTE and $1.3 million, with universities using an average of roughly six services. The change reflects universities bringing financial reporting, payroll-related functions, and information technology in-house or moving them to other providers while retaining selected common functions.

Table 13: Statewide USSE Context, FY2015 and FY2025

Measure	FY2015	FY2025
Approximate USSE staff	32 FTE	5.2 FTE
Approximate operating budget	$4.8 million	$1.3 million
Average number of services used per university	11	6

Source: HECC 2024 university evaluations, statewide shared administrative services assessment; USSE staff data reported February 2025.

Several functions continue through statewide or multi-institution arrangements, even when they are not delivered by USSE. The University of Oregon hosts the administration of the Oregon Public Universities Retirement Plans. Six of the seven public universities participate in the Public Universities Risk Management Insurance Trust (PURMIT). Collective bargaining and selected treasury and debt services also continue to involve shared or coordinated arrangements.

TRU + PSU Shared Administrative Services Work

The current state financial-sustainability investment for EOU, Oregon Tech, SOU, WOU, and PSU includes an assessment of opportunities to share or standardize administrative functions. The service areas identified for assessment include purchasing and procurement; information technology, platforms, and cybersecurity; legal services; compliance and risk management; internal audit; payroll; and human-resource functions such as training and recruitment. The intended outcome is actionable implementation planning tied to both service quality and cost savings.

WOU Current Participation

Shared Service / Function	WOU Response
University Shared Services Enterprise (USSE, hosted by OSU)	
Financial Reporting	N/P
Capital Asset Accounting (currently only OIT)	N/P
Payroll & Tax Processing (includes relationship w PEBB, PERS/Federal retirement*)	—
Collective Bargaining *	P
Information Technology/5th Site	—
Treasury Management Services:	
Legacy Debt Services-Post Issuance Tax Compliance	P

Shared Service / Function	WOU Response
Legacy Debt Services-Debt Accounting	P
Non-Legacy Debt Services	P
Bank Reconciliations (and other ancillary banking services)2	N/P
Endowment Services	P
Other Miscellaneous Statements of Work:	
Provosts Council Administrative Support	P
Legislative Fiscal Impact Statement Support	P
Risk Management Analyst (TRUs only)	P
Public University Fund Administration	P
Eastern Oregon University	—
Retirement Plans *	
Legacy 401(a) Plan	—
Legacy 403(b) Plan	—
Optional Retirement Plan (ORP)	—
Tax-Deferred Investment (TDI) Plan	—
SRP Plan	—
Public University Risk Management and Insurance Trust (Risk Management)	P
Notes:	

Source: University 2024-25 evaluation framework. Blank responses are shown as an em dash and are not interpreted as participation or non-participation.

Current Institution-Specific Activity

WOU participates in the joint stopped-out-student re-engagement work and in the broader TRU + PSU shared-services assessment. The university's state sustainability investment also supports modernization of its Banner enterprise system, with the goal of standardizing administrative processes, improving functionality, and reducing ongoing costs.

FINANCIAL HEALTH ASSESSMENT

This section provides an assessment of the university's current financial position, provides information on cost efficiency, and summarizes recent budget actions as well as recent, targeted state investment to improve sustainability. Financial monitoring is conducted annually by HECC staff. The most recent report, titled Financial Sustainability of Oregon Public Universities, was published in June 2025.

The financial sustainability report is an attempt to provide a warning of potential instability for policymakers. While no singular method of analysis is perfectly capable of determining long-term financial sustainability, the report uses currently available data. It assesses three factors that lead to an increased risk of predictable instability, including sharp declines in enrollment, declines in financial ratios over time, and an increased reliance on a single revenue source (i.e., state funding). The trends for all three are summarized in this section. Also, the analysis in the report uses a dual perspective approach, by providing information across the whole enterprise including the foundation for the composite financial index, and then only for the education and general (E&G) fund for the reliance on state funding.

The most important predictor of financial instability is enrollment. Specifically, significant declines in enrollment over a short period of time. Table E considers fall fourth week total FTE enrollment over the past decade for WOU and the public universities combined. WOU's enrollment over the past decade has fallen more than that of the public universities collectively. The trend in enrollment is noted as "struggling" in Table 1 on page 7 of the 2025 financial sustainability report.

Table E: Fall Fourth Week, Total FTE

	Fall 2016	Fall 2025	Variance	Variance	Annual Growth Rate
WOU	4,529	2,978	(1,551)	(34%)	(4.6%)
All OPUs	83,159	82,154	(1,005)	(1%)	(0.1%)

Source: HECC Office of Analytics and Strategy.

Additionally, by evaluating the composite financial index (CFI), the trend in WOU's finances is noted as "struggling" over the recent past when considering the whole enterprise (i.e., all funds which include E&G, restricted, auxiliary, etc. and the expendable portion of the foundation's net assets). As shown in Table 8 on page 13 of the 2025 financial sustainability report, the CFI in FY2020 for WOU was 0.21 and 1.90 in FY2024. However, the industry standard for sustainability is 3.0 or above.

Table F provides a summary of the five-year trend in the E&G fund. During three of the past five years, WOU has generated a negative operating margin with expenses exceeding available revenue. During the period noted, expenses have grown an average of 2.8 percent annually while revenues have grown an average of 0.4 percent annually. However, WOU's fund balance has improved slightly.

Table F: Trend in General (E&G) Fund

	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024	FY2025
Total Revenue	71,854,753	74,864,684	69,007,250	73,431,351	73,084,887
Total Expenses	67,224,637	71,563,224	70,163,541	73,696,960	75,031,624
Operating Margin	4,630,116	3,301,461	(1,156,291)	(265,609)	(1,946,738)
Operating Margin	6%	4%	(2%)	0%	(3%)
% State Revenue	40%	41%	46%	45%	47%
Fund Balance (months)	1.8	2.4	2.4	2.2	2.2

Source: Survey data submitted to the HECC annually by the university.

Cost Efficiency

The changing higher education landscape will require efforts by the universities to maximize efficiency, manage spending, and improve student affordability. To assess cost efficiency, several factors are considered, including the alignment of staffing levels with enrollment, degree production relative to enrollment, and spending per completion.

Table G provides a summary of the recent trend in staffing ratios. For WOU, the total number of employees and faculty have declined but at a rate less than enrollment leading to lower ratios over time. There is no accepted standard or best practice measure for these ratios; however, when enrollment declines, and the number of employees does not to the same extent, this can create structural inefficiencies.

Table G: Trend in Staffing Ratios

Data Years:	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Variance (2019 to 2023)
Student FTE	4,131.3	3,836.0	3,370.7	3,135.0	3,244.2	(21%)
Employee FTE	713.8	681.6	618.2	632.2	653.1	(9%)
Faculty FTE	246.5	254.4	216.2	196.4	206.6	(16%)
Student-to-Faculty	16.8	15.1	15.6	16.0	15.7	(6%)
Student-to-Staff	5.8	5.6	5.5	5.0	5.0	(14%)

Source: ORS 350.360 Higher Education Employees Annual Report, November 2025.

Degree productivity, which accounts for enrollment and expressed as completions per 1,000 student FTE, is a different metric than a degree completion rate. It is an attempt to assess cost effectiveness. Table H shows the trend in degree productivity over time. The completions per 1,000 FTE metric is calculated by dividing the number of completions by the number of student FTE and then multiplying by 1,000. Another way to assess cost efficiency is to consider what is being produced relative to spending. Therefore, Table H also includes E&G spending per completion. Total E&G expenses are divided by the number of degree completions. The spending data is unadjusted for inflation.

Table H: Trend in Efficiency Ratios

	2019-20 FY2020	2020-21 FY2021	2021-22 FY2022	2022-23 FY2023	2023-24 FY2024	Variance (2020 to 2024)
Annual Student FTE	4,171.7	3,923.4	3,582.6	3,439.1	3,575.5	(14%)
Degree Completions	1,322.0	1,161.0	1,185.0	1,033.0	967.0	(27%)
Completions per 1,000 FTE	316.9	295.9	330.8	300.4	270.5	(15%)
Total E&G Expenses	$74,720,063	$67,224,637	$71,563,224	$70,163,541	$73,696,960	(1%)
Spending per Completion	$56,520	$57,902	$60,391	$67,922	$76,212	35%

Source: Student FTE and degree completion data is from the Public University Data Dashboard. E&G spending data is from an annual survey conducted by HECC staff.

Recent Budget Actions

Recent actions have occurred within the university's E&G fund to address and improve financial sustainability. As noted in a recent review conducted by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU), significant progress has been made in controlling expenses. Ongoing efforts have

included assessment of vacant positions, maximizing revenue collection efforts, focusing on essential needs, enhancing student-centered activities, and identifying shared services and support opportunities.

Current State Investment to Improve Long-Term Financial Sustainability

Additionally, during the 2023-25 biennium, the state invested $25 million to improve the financial sustainability of the four technical/regional universities (EOU, OIT, SOU, WOU) and PSU. The funding, which was appropriated to the HECC, is intended to support the universities in realigning institutional offerings and resources with current and emerging enrollment and economic realities to achieve long-term financial sustainability. The funds will be used for initiatives that seek to reduce ongoing costs, increase revenue, and improve recruitment and retention in the pursuit of student success.

Of the $25 million total, $6.3 million was allocated to the five participating universities through the existing funding distribution model. The remaining $18.7 million was awarded through a request for applications process. The fifteen projects funded via that process will generate an estimated net return of $95 million over the next five years after implementation. This is above the one-time cost of the projects.

For WOU, a comprehensive initiative to upgrade their current Banner system to enhance functionality to standardize and streamline existing administrative processes across departments. A $2.3 million investment is projected to save $750 thousand annually, mostly in personnel costs, with a total net financial impact of $1.1 million in the first five years after implementation.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

ORS 352.061 requires HECC to assess each university governing board against the findings in ORS 352.025. The framework reviews meeting frequency and public access, transparency and public-records compliance, bylaws, fiduciary oversight, tuition-setting processes, presidential selection and evaluation, engagement with the institutional mission, coordination with HECC on significant academic program changes, and stewardship of real property.

The table below presents the university's current framework response in the same statutory categories used in prior evaluations. HECC's assessment is based on the institution's submitted narrative and identified governing-board materials. Inclusion of the response does not substitute for independent legal review of individual board actions.

Governing Board Focus Area	Evaluation Question	Supporting Narrative (documentation may include links to materials on board website)	Data Source
Transparency (ORS 352.025(1)(a))	Board meets at least quarterly. ORS 352.076(6).	Yes. The Board meets at least quarterly, plus an annual planning retreat. In 2024-2025, the Board met seven times. Western Oregon University Board Website: Meeting Schedules and Materials	Board of Trustees
Transparency (ORS 352.025(1)(a))	Board provides public notice of agenda and meetings. ORS 352.025(1)(a).	Yes, the Board provides public notice of upcoming meetings on its web page and a reminder through campus emails in advance of meetings. Western Oregon University Board Website: Meeting Schedules and Materials Western Oregon University Bylaws and Board Statement on the Conduct of Public Meetings	Board of Trustees
Transparency (ORS 352.025(1)(a))	The Board operates in a transparent manner and in compliance with Public Meetings and Public Records laws. ORS 352.025(1)(a).	Yes, the Board has an approved statement on the conduct of public meetings, as mentioned in the Board's Bylaws. All meetings are in full compliance with all relevant state laws. Western Oregon University Bylaws and Board Statement on the Conduct of Public Meetings	Board of Trustees
Transparency (ORS 352.025(1)(a))	The Board has adopted bylaws. ORS 352.076(5).	The Western Oregon University Board of Trustees adopted the Bylaws at its April 22, 2015, meeting. The Board also amended the Bylaws at its June 12, 2024, meeting. Western Oregon University Board Website: Board Statements, including Bylaws	Board of Trustees
Accountability (ORS 352.025(1)(a))	The Board demonstrates its accountability on behalf of the university and awareness of its mission and fiduciary duties.	Yes. The Finance and Administration Committee (FAC) meets quarterly: they met four times in 2024-2025. The FAC is charged with ensuring effective operations and sound stewardship of the university's financial, technology, and physical assets in support of the university's mission. It is responsible for making decisions delegated to it and making recommendations to the Board, consistent with Board Statements and University policy. In addition to the FAC, the full Board of Trustees reviews and actively analyzes past, current, and projected fiscal details such as revenues, expenditures, and fund balances. The Board review culminates in a vote to approve quarterly financial management reports, proposed changes to Tuition and Mandatory Fees, and the Preliminary and Adjusted Budget Proposals. Western Oregon University Board Website: Committee Information	Board of Trustees
Accountability (ORS 352.025(1)(a))	The Board has established a process for determining tuition and mandatory enrollment fees that provides for participation of enrolled students and the recognized student government of the university. ORS 352.102(2)	The University has established the Tuition and Fee Advisory Committee. The committee advises the University President on the President's recommendations to the Board of Trustees regarding resident tuition and mandatory student fees for the upcoming academic year. As required by HB 4141 (2018), the Committee consists of two members from the student government (ASWOU), two students from historically underserved populations, two faculty members, and two administrators; in addition, several at-large students serve on the Committee. The committee meets annually during the Winter term. In the Winter 2025 term, the committee met four times and made its decision. Tuition and Fee Advisory Committee Website The Incidental Fee Committee determines the incidental fee amount and distribution. Its members are composed of students, faculty, and staff, but only student members may vote. Incidental Fee Committee That process influenced the 2025-2026 Academic Year & Summer 2025 Tuition and Fee Book that was approved by the Western Oregon University Board of Trustees at its April 23, 2025 meeting.	Board of Trustees

Governing Board Focus Area	Evaluation Question	Supporting Narrative (documentation may include links to materials on board website)	Data Source
Accountability (ORS 352.025(1)(a))	Board selects and regularly assess the university president. ORS 352.096.	Yes. The Board is responsible for selecting the President and provides an annual performance review for the President. For the 2024-2025 Academic Year, the Board evaluated the University President at its June 4, 2025, meeting. Western Oregon University Board Statement on the Performance Evaluation of the University President Western Oregon University Board Statement on Presidential Vacancies.	Board of Trustees
Engagement in the University's Mission (ORS 352.025(1)(b))	The Board adopts the mission statement. ORS 352.089(2).	The Western Oregon University Board of Trustees approved the Western Oregon University's 2024-2030 Strategic Plan at their February 14, 2024, meeting. Included in the Strategic Plan was a new mission and vision statement. Minutes for February 14, 2024 Board Meeting	Board of Trustees
Coordination across the State of Oregon (ORS 352.025(1)(e))	The Board forwards the university's mission statement to the HECC. ORS 352.089(1).	Upon the Board's adoption of Western Oregon University's 2024-2030 Strategic Plan. The plan was forwarded to the HECC. At the HECC's April 11, 2024, meeting, the plan was Docket Item #6.0 on its agenda and was approved by the commission.	Board of Trustees
Coordination across the State of Oregon (ORS 352.025(1)(e))	The Board forwards any significant change in the university's academic programs to HECC. ORS 352.089(1).	The Western Oregon University Board of Trustees has not approved any new programs since February 2023.	Board of Trustees
Real Property Holdings (ORS 352.025 (2)(c))	Legal title to all real property, whether acquired before or after the creation of a governing board, through state funding, revenue bonds or philanthropy, shall be taken and held in the name of the State of Oregon, acting by and through the governing board.	All Western Oregon University property, including those in Monmouth and Salem are held in the name of the State of Oregon. Documentation is held by the counties of Polk and Marion.	Board of Trustees or Finance VPs?

Source: University 2024-25 evaluation framework and governing-board materials identified by the institution.

CONCLUSION

This report is guided by Oregon Revised Statute (ORS) 352.061, which requires the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) to evaluate each public university's achievement of outcomes, measures of progress, goals, and targets; assess progress toward statewide postsecondary education goals; and review the operation of each university's governing board consistent with ORS 352.025. The evaluation draws on accreditation materials, institutional self-assessments, state and federal data, and information provided by Western Oregon University (WOU) during the current biennial evaluation cycle.

Western Oregon University continues to serve an important access and workforce role within Oregon's public higher education system. Located in Monmouth and serving students throughout the state, WOU has a longstanding focus on educator preparation, behavioral health, public service, transfer pathways, and personalized student support. The university is also recognized as a Hispanic-Serving Institution and serves substantial numbers of Oregon residents, first-generation students, Pell Grant recipients, and students from historically underserved communities. Its partnerships with school districts, education service districts, community colleges, Tribal partners, employers, and other public universities extend WOU's reach well beyond its campuses in Monmouth and Salem.

WOU remains accredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) and has been continuously accredited since 1924. NWCCU reaffirmed WOU's accreditation in July 2023 following its Year Seven Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness. That review resulted in recommendations related to systematic institutional evaluation and planning, financial planning and management, and use of current higher-education practices and technology. WOU completed an Ad Hoc review and Financial Resources Review in 2025 and a Mid-Cycle Review and Financial Resources Review in Spring 2026. A further Financial Resources Review is scheduled for Spring 2027, followed by the Year Six review in Spring 2029 and the next Year Seven Evaluation in Spring 2030. WOU also maintains specialized accreditation or candidacy in educator preparation, rehabilitation counseling, and occupational therapy.

Enrollment remains the university's most significant long-term challenge. Total headcount declined from 3,951 students in Fall 2023 to 3,823 in Fall 2024 and 3,626 in Fall 2025, a decrease of 325 students, or 8.2 percent, over two years. The longer-term FTE trend is more pronounced: Fall FTE declined from 4,529 in 2016 to 2,978 in 2025, a decrease of 34 percent. At the same time, WOU continues to serve a predominantly Oregon-resident student population. In Fall 2024, 85.6 percent of students were Oregon residents, 76.4 percent attended full-time, 46.8 percent were Pell Grant recipients, and 34.7 percent were underrepresented minority students. Newly admitted undergraduate enrollment also showed some stabilization, increasing from 979 students in Fall 2024 to 1,035 in Fall 2025 after reaching 1,066 in Fall 2023.

Student success outcomes include several notable strengths. WOU reported a first-year retention rate of 74.5 percent for the Fall 2023 cohort; Pell Grant recipients were retained at an even higher rate of 78.4 percent. For the Fall 2018 first-time, full-time cohort, the six-year graduation rate was 50.7 percent, compared with 43.8 percent for underrepresented minority students and 48.2 percent for Pell Grant recipients. Transfer-student outcomes were comparatively strong: 73.4 percent of the Fall 2018 transfer cohort graduated within four years, including 69.1 percent of underrepresented minority transfer students and 69.8 percent of Pell Grant recipients. During the 2024-25 academic year, WOU awarded 788 bachelor's degrees, 215 master's degrees, and 311 certificates. Underrepresented minority completions increased to 401 in 2024-25, up from 338 the prior year.

Affordability remains a comparative strength for WOU. Resident undergraduate tuition and mandatory fees increased from $8,700 in 2016-17 to $12,087 in 2025-26, an average annual increase of 3.7 percent compared with 4.5 percent statewide. Total cost of attendance increased from $22,752 in 2014-15 to $26,741 in 2023-24, an average annual increase of 1.8 percent, while average net price increased from $14,008 to $14,786, or 0.6 percent annually. WOU's affordability rate improved from 60 percent in 2014-15 to 34 percent in 2023-24, below the statewide rate of 45 percent. These indicators suggest that WOU has maintained comparatively favorable student-cost outcomes even as enrollment and financial pressures have intensified.

WOU also continues to make substantial economic and workforce contributions. A 2026 economic-impact study prepared by Econsult Solutions estimated $766.2 million in annual statewide economic impact, supporting approximately 4,330 jobs and $220.3 million in annual employee compensation. That estimate includes university operations, capital investment, student and visitor spending, and the increased earnings of WOU alumni who remain in Oregon. The study attributes $171.3 million in statewide impact to university operations and reports more than 35,000 WOU alumni living in Oregon, with more than 25,000 participating in the workforce. HECC employment data similarly show that 78.0 percent of resident graduates from the 2017-18 cohort were employed in Oregon five years after graduation. These outcomes reinforce WOU's role as an Oregon workforce pipeline, particularly in education, behavioral health, public service, and other fields with persistent statewide needs.

Financial sustainability requires continued attention. HECC's 2025 financial sustainability analysis characterized WOU's enrollment and financial-ratio trends as "struggling." The university's composite financial index improved from 0.21 in FY2020 to 1.90 in FY2024, but remained below the industry benchmark of 3.0. WOU generated negative E&G operating margins in three of the five years reviewed, including an approximately $1.95 million deficit in FY2025. Over the five-year period, expenses grew at an average annual rate of 2.8 percent while revenues grew at 0.4 percent. Staffing has declined as enrollment has fallen, but not at the same rate, and spending per completion increased over the period reviewed. WOU has taken steps to control expenses and improve operational efficiency, and a $2.3 million state-supported Banner modernization initiative is projected to save approximately $750,000 annually and produce a net financial impact of about $1.1 million during its first five years.

WOU's Board of Trustees continued to carry out its statutory responsibilities during the evaluation period. The Board met seven times during the 2024-25 academic year in addition to its planning activities, provides public notice and access to meeting materials, and operates under adopted bylaws that were amended in June 2024. The Finance and Administration Committee provides ongoing fiscal oversight, while the Tuition and Fee Advisory Committee provides a structured process for student participation in tuition and mandatory-fee recommendations. The Board also evaluates the university president annually and retains responsibility for mission oversight, significant academic program changes, and real-property responsibilities established in statute.

Overall, Western Oregon University continues to make an important contribution to Oregon through its access mission, comparatively favorable affordability, strong transfer outcomes, educator and behavioral-health pipelines, and high rates of graduate employment in the state. Positive developments include strong first-year retention, particularly among Pell Grant recipients, continued transfer success, growth in underrepresented minority completions, continued accreditation, and investments in administrative modernization. At the same time, sustained enrollment decline and structural financial pressure remain significant challenges. HECC will continue to monitor enrollment stabilization, outcomes for historically underserved students, NWCCU financial-resource recommendations, operating performance, cost alignment, and progress toward expected savings from current sustainability initiatives. WOU's long-term ability to sustain its mission will depend on aligning academic offerings, staffing, administrative systems, and financial resources with its enrollment base and Oregon's workforce needs.


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