



Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor

Higher Education Coordinating Commission

Ben Cannon, Executive Director
255 Capitol Street NE, Third Floor
Salem, OR 97310
www.oregon.gov/HigherEd

January 26, 2018

Dear Legislator,

Attached please find the Higher Education Coordinating Commission's 2017 evaluations of Southern Oregon University (SOU), Oregon Institute of Technology (OIT), Western Oregon University (WOU), and Eastern Oregon University (EOU). Under ORS 352.061, the HECC is required to evaluate each public university every two years.

Under statute, each evaluation must include:

- A report on the university's achievement of outcomes, measures of progress, goals and targets;
- An assessment of the university's progress toward achieving the mission of all education beyond high school as described in ORS 350.014; and
- An assessment as to how well the establishment of a governing board at the university comports with the findings set forth in ORS 352.025.

The HECC's 2017 evaluations represent our third year of conducting university evaluations since assuming this responsibility in 2014, and the second year we have evaluated SOU, OIT, WOU, and EOU. We are pleased to report this year that we again found the universities highly responsive to our requests for information and cooperative generally throughout the conduct of this process.

This year's evaluations highlight the significant contributions SOU, OIT, WOU, and EOU make to the State of Oregon and to their communities. They draw attention to recent trends in enrollment, completion, and diversity, and measure the universities' performance against a set of established financial benchmarks. The reports underscore the magnitude of the governance changes that the Legislature enacted in 2013 and that took full effect with the empowerment of institutional governing boards on July 1, 2015. SOU, OIT, WOU, and EOU have active and engaged Boards of Trustees that have assumed full responsibility for the governance of their respective institutions.

Under separate statutory authority, the HECC is in the process of conducting its final review and determination of whether SOU and EOU have met the specific conditions that were established for them upon the creation of their institutional boards. We intend to finalize that determination at the HECC's April 12 meeting, and will subsequently transmit that finding to legislators and the Governor as required by Section 168a, Chapter 768, Oregon Laws 2013 (as amended by SB 493 (2015)).

It is worth noting that as a coordinating commission, the HECC has no direct authority over many critical functions of the university, including curriculum, finances, and personnel. We hope and expect that these evaluations, as well as other reports the HECC undertakes, provide guidance and support to institutional leaders and the Legislature as they work to improve Oregon higher education.

Yours sincerely,

Neil Bryant
Chair

Ben Cannon
Executive Director