



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

February 25, 2020

Dear Legislator,

Attached please find the Higher Education Coordinating Commission's 2019 evaluations of Western Oregon University (WOU), Eastern Oregon University (EOU), Southern Oregon University (SOU), and Oregon Institute of Technology (Oregon Tech). 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.

This year's evaluations highlight the significant contributions WOU, EOU, SOU, and Oregon Tech 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 metrics.

As measured by the composite financial index (CFI), three of the four universities strengthened their financial position in the last year. The exception was Southern Oregon University (SOU), where expenditure increases in FY 2019 outpaced revenue growth, due largely to a four percent decline in enrollment. We hope SOU's proposed four percent cut in spending in FY 2020 and its recently-convened Presidential Task Force on Financial Sustainability will improve its financial position.

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. Of the universities evaluated in 2019, there has been an overall upward trajectory of resident (in-state) student completions and, when disaggregated by race/ethnicity, there continues to be an increasing trend of resident under-represented student completions.

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,


David Rives
Chair


Ben Cannon
Executive Director