

**Board of Trustees  
Academic and Student Affairs Committee Meeting  
Thursday, October 15, 2020  
Videoconference**

**MINUTES**

**Call to Order/Roll/Declaration of a Quorum**

Committee Members:

Jonathon Bullock	Present	Barry Thalden	Present
Dylann Loverro	Present	Steve Vincent	Present
Deborah Rosenberg	Present	janelle wilson	Present
Daniel Santos	Present		

Chair Jonathon Bullock called the meeting to order at 12:03 p.m. The secretary recorded the roll and a quorum was verified.

Other trustees in attendance: Lyn Hennion, Paul Nicholson, President Linda Schott and Bill Thorndike.

Other attendees and Zoom panelists included: Dr. Neil Woolf, Vice President for Enrollment Management and Student Affairs; Greg Perkinson, Vice President for Finance and Administration; Dr. Susan Walsh, Provost; Jason Catz, General Counsel; Janet Fratella, Vice President for University Advancement; Sabrina Prud'homme, Board Secretary; Dr. Jody Waters, Associate Provost; Dr. Karen Stone, Associate Vice President for Academic Resource Management; Dr. Matt Stillman, Registrar; Dr. Clayton Austin, Hart Wilson and Bill Bateman, all from the Center for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning; Lea Griess, Student Success Coordinator; Luke Williams, Raider Student Services; Chris Stanek, Institutional Research; and Kathy Park, Office of the Board Secretary.

**Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

**Consent Agenda**

Vice Chair Santos moved to approve the consent agenda, as presented. Trustee wilson seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

**Provost's Report**

Academic Affairs Update

Dr. Susan Walsh said the chairs and directors of academic divisions and programs have been planning for the upcoming academic year. The reopening plan for academic affairs is going well and is on target. Generally, everyone is positive and upbeat and the students seem to be doing well. Dr. Walsh said she has asked faculty to practice flexibility, empathy and understanding and they are responding well to students' needs.

Dr. Walsh discussed *The 4 Disciplines of Execution*, a book she required directors to read. The book encourages the selection of wildly important goals (WIGS) then choosing two to focus on. She and the directors selected two equity, diversity and

inclusion-oriented goals. The first is trying to address the racial inequalities in curriculum and pedagogy that might exist and reducing those challenges for students. The second is identifying areas where academic affairs can focus more intensely and intentionally on access for students, especially those from underrepresented populations, through recruitment and retention.

### Provost's Council Update

Dr. Walsh said the governor was awarded \$4 million in emergency education relief funds from the federal government to be used for public and private institutions of higher education. These funds will be used for an online consortium/clearinghouse/course exchange. The idea is that the seventeen community colleges and seven public universities would offer an array of online courses for all Oregon students to access. Some precollege opportunities also are being discussed. The implementation is daunting (e.g., institutions use different learning management and financial aid systems). There will be challenges with regard to how seamless those online courses will be between institutions and with the ambitious implementation timeline.

Responding to Board Chair Nicholson's later inquiry about the online consortium project, Dr. Walsh said the HECC's executive director, Ben Cannon, worked directly with the governor's office to develop the project. The community colleges were involved at an early stage in the conversation but the universities were not included until the proposal was well-formed. Mr. Cannon and Veronica Dujon presented the proposal to the Provost's Council in August; the provosts were surprised there had been no consultation prior to that. President Schott added that the presidents were not asked at all; when they learned about it, all of the presidents were opposed to the project.

The Provost's Council continues to work on transfers from community colleges to universities, as required by House Bill 2998. The biggest issue is agreeing on transferability for university and community college classes. The newest initiative is common course numbering; SOU already is working with Rogue Community College on a version of this where same-numbered courses would transfer automatically.

### Other General Updates

Dr. Walsh mentioned the updates on curriculum and Strategic Direction I and the progress of the task force on transforming general education.

One new undergraduate degree in sustainability is in progress. Dr. Walsh also discussed progress on micro-credentials or badges. Several have been approved (e.g., sustainable tourism, professional writing, cinema production technology, and social media strategy); more are close to approval (e.g., values-based leadership, geographic information systems, environmental research and data analysis, and team leadership and collaboration); and others are forthcoming (e.g., equity, diversity and inclusion and e-sports management). Responding to Trustee Rosenberg's inquiry, Dr. Walsh said prospective employers are supportive and excited about the micro-credentials.

## **Vice President's Report**

### Other General Updates

Dr. Neil Woolf said eleven staff members in his division lost their homes in the recent

fires and it has been incredible see the team rally around each other. Cares reports were filed on 96 students, 77 of whom lost their homes or were displaced by the fires. Staff members in the Office of the Dean of Students and the Housing Office are caring for these students and helping them find homes. Compared to last year, there has been a 58 percent increase in SOU Cares reports filed.

The Student Recreation Center re-opened with limited hours. They are averaging 200 visits a day, even with the limited hours and capacity. The e-sports club team will begin tryouts later in the month. Their hub in the Student Recreation Center is 90 percent complete and will have twelve gaming stations.

The TRIO program (also known as Success at Southern) received a 5-year, \$1.6 million grant, which will be used to continue to help first-generation and non-traditional students succeed in college. SOU also received a \$68,000 grant for expansion of services at the Veteran's Resource Center.

Dr. Woolf said this fall SOU officially moved to being test-optional for admissions. SOU had previously been test-optional on a case-by-case basis. The seven public universities agreed to transition to test-optional for next year but SOU decided to transition earlier. If prospective students have test results, they can submit the results for inclusion in the holistic review of their applications.

SOU also pivoted to accepting self-reported GPAs. National data shows such reporting is 96 percent accurate. This allows SOU to more quickly admit applicants. Responding to Chair Bullock's later inquiry, Dr. Woolf said transitioning to test-optional and accepting self-reported GPAs is about getting an admission decision quicker.

The Admissions Office has resumed limited campus tours for prospective students and their families. Over the past year, campus tours declined by 90 percent. Six of the top ten recruitment strategies relate to getting prospective students on campus through some version of campus tours.

Dr. Woolf said the Student Health and Wellness Center and the Office of the Dean of Students have been instrumental in helping with student COVID safety protocols and expressed gratitude to Anna D'Amato and the staff in both offices. Since the beginning of the term, one student was provided isolation housing and a few students out of state and off campus have tested positive for COVID. Otherwise, the transition to opening the campus has been good.

Dr. Woolf mentioned previous conversations about search engine optimization and said it is working well. SOU-related terms showing up on pages 1 and 2 of Google have greatly increased, which drives an increase in web traffic.

Responding to Trustee Vincent's inquiry, Dr. Woolf said SOU uses secret shoppers in the admissions process to test the process and identify opportunities to reduce frustrations. Kelly Moutsatson also works closely with Raider ambassadors on any feedback they may have. Parents also provide recommendations which are often helpful.

## Review of Enrollment Dashboard and Discussion

Dr. Woolf mentioned a few structural changes to the dashboard. Although enrollment is down, first-year retention is up slightly, which was attributed, in part, to Navigate.

There was a substantial drop in non-admitted students from fall 2019 to fall 2020, largely in Advanced Southern Credit enrollment. The number of those students taking SOU classes while in high school dropped by 511. Of those, 411 are from Phoenix High School, which has had obvious difficulties after the fires. President Schott contacted their superintendent, who said they plan to return to the program in the future.

Dr. Woolf reviewed the SOU Interactive Fact Book that Chris Stanek and Information Technology are working on. Some of the links include searchable information back to 2010 and others to 2016.

Dr. Woolf then compared data from fall 2019 to fall 2020. Although the number of applications decreased slightly, the number of completed applications increased, possibly due to the test-optional and self-reported GPA changes in admissions. More students were admitted and confirmed in 2020. However, not as many students enrolled in 2020, probably the result COVID and the fires during the enrollment period.

Dr. Woolf then discussed the detailed data by student type, saying the applications from nonresident freshmen decreased by almost 11 percent and enrollment by those students decreased almost 18 percent. Enrollment for new freshmen was down about 11 percent, compared to 16 percent nationally. International students were down 48.2 percent, due in large part to travel restrictions and lack of visas under the current federal administration.

Responding to Trustee Wilson's inquiry, Dr. Woolf said the melt rate for students who confirmed but did not enroll was 10 percentage points higher than last year. There were also more students dropping courses in the add/drop period following the start of the term. Students can disenroll up to their last course, which is when SOU intervenes to help them from disenrolling completely and provide possible help.

## **Action, Information and Discussion Items**

### Student Success Initiatives and Updates

#### *Faculty Professional Development Update*

Dr. Susan Walsh said about \$250,000 from CARES Act funding was earmarked for faculty professional development and Dr. Clay Austin has been leading that work. Dr. Austin discussed the workshops and webinars curated by the Center for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning and said there has been much networking among universities and organizations on implementing online teaching formats. Hart Wilson and Bill Bateman shared some of their experiences with hosting online training sessions and Vlogs over the summer.

Dr. Austin highlighted the very successful summer symposium –a professional development event to bring faculty back for the fall term in ways meaningful and helpful for students. There were 16 sessions averaging over 30 people per session.

### *Navigate Implementation*

Dr. Neil Woolf said the Navigate tool is fully operational and the focus will now shift to showing the effect it is having on student success. Dr. Matt Stillman provided a recap of the Navigate tool. He later said it may take a couple of years to show the impact on graduation rates but persistence will be measured starting in the spring.

Lea Griess and Luke Williams provided a live demonstration of the system from the faculty-staff and student perspectives.

Responding to Vice Chair Santos' inquiry, Dr. Stillman said the impact of Navigate can be measured and that is being worked on now. Trustee Thalden and Board Chair Nicholson praised the system. President Schott added that this was a major investment in student success.

### *Multicultural Commons: Virtual Tour*

Dr. Neil Woolf said the video of the tour would be shown at the meeting of the full board. The construction of the Social Justice and Equity Center is completed and the programming continues. Trustee Wilson added that the project would not have been expedited without support from Vice President Woolf, President Schott and others; the care and attention given to hear students and give them opportunities to provide feedback and input was fantastic. President Schott said it was important to her to get the project done.

Trustee Loverro added that she was happy to see the progress from the initial discussions on this being an issue that should be addressed to the creation and design of the center with input from the students who use these spaces; she was pleased to see action taken to adjust the space to meet the needs of students.

### *National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)*

Dr. Jody Waters provided background information on NSSE and reviewed statistics of its administration at SOU, as included in the meeting materials. There are two main areas assessed in NSSE: engagement indicators and high-impact practices. The former focuses on the current year while the latter assesses the totality of the student experience. The survey allows SOU to determine the extent to which it is achieving objectives set for the institution, established indicators and overall mission fulfillment. NSSE results are also fundamental to accreditation reporting.

Dr. Woolf added that student engagement measured in NSSE differs from satisfaction. The student satisfaction survey was implemented in the spring. The results of both surveys are used to adjust programming in Student Life and other areas, as needed.

Dr. Waters provided an overview of the 2020 results, as included in the meeting materials. She highlighted that 82 percent of the first-year students rated their overall experience as excellent or good, down 1 percent from 2019; while 81 percent of seniors rated their overall experience as excellent or good, up from 79 percent in 2019.

Eighty-three percent of first-year students stated they would probably or definitely return to SOU, up from 74 percent. Regarding first-year students' responses about

their satisfaction at SOU and intent to return, 29 percent said they had considered leaving SOU in the current academic year; this was down from 43 percent in 2019. Discussion later ensued on the significant decrease in the proportion of students thinking they might need to leave the university. The top explanations provided were personal reasons and personal financial concerns (not cost of attendance) – issues over which the university does not have control. In 2019, the third top reason was other academic issues (e.g., availability of major and courses not offered), over which SOU has control; that was not one of the top six reasons in 2020. Responding to Chair Bullock’s inquiry, Drs. Woolf and Waters said the top two reasons cited were consistent with other institutions and with NSSE data.

Responding to Trustee Thalden’s inquiry, Dr. Waters said the response rate is consistent for institutions of SOU’s size and the results are solid. This was the best rate SOU has ever seen in the administration of NSSE. Chris Stanek concurred.

Dr. Waters reviewed the engagement indicator comparisons included in the meeting materials. Dr. Woolf then reviewed the quality of interactions for first-year students, saying the best way to retain students is to get them engaged with a faculty member; over the last couple of years, changes have been made to the orientation programs to create student engagement earlier and earlier. Dr. Waters said SOU has enacted strategies based on NSSE data; discussions about specific strategies to implement will be more robust after more time has been spent analyzing the data.

Responding to Chair Bullock’s inquiry, Dr. Waters said the data can be disaggregated to make determinations about specific student population groups. Students of underrepresented groups respond at far lower rates than students of majority communities and that needs to be evaluated to increase the response rates.

#### Proposed 2021-2022 Committee Meeting Schedule

Chair Bullock reviewed the proposed meeting schedule included in the meeting materials. Committee members had no comments or recommended changes.

#### Future Meetings

The committee’s next meeting will be on January 21, 2021.

#### **Adjournment**

Chair Bullock adjourned the meeting at 2:53 p.m.

Date: January 21, 2021

Respectfully submitted by,



Sabrina Prud’homme  
University Board Secretary