

**Board of Trustees  
Academic and Student Affairs Committee Meeting  
Thursday, November 18, 2021**

**MINUTES**

***Theme: “Taking Stock: How are we doing eight weeks into the fall term?”***

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

Committee Members:

Jonathon Bullock	Present	Barry Thalden	Present
Debra Lee	Present	Steve Vincent	Present
Deborah Rosenberg	Present	janelle wilson	Present
Daniel Santos	Present		

Chair Jonathon Bullock called the meeting to order at 12:05 p.m. The secretary recorded the roll and a quorum was verified.

Other trustees in attendance: Lyn Henion, President Linda Schott.

Other attendees and Zoom webinar panelists included: Greg Perkinson, Vice President for Finance and Administration; Toya Cooper, Vice President for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion; Dr. Susan Walsh, Provost; Dr. Neil Woolf, Vice President for Enrollment Management and Student Affairs; Janet Fratella, Vice President for University Advancement; Dan DeNeui, Associate Provost; Dr. Karen Stone, Associate VP for Academic Resource Management; Chris Stanek, Director of Institutional Research; Dr. Vince Smith, Director of Business, Communication, and the Environment; Sabrina Prud’homme, Board Secretary; Josh Lovern, Director of Budget and Planning; Danielle Hammer, University Seminar; Bonnie Drennen, Bridge Program Student; Kate Stoneham, Bridge Program Student; Trent Allen, Bridge Program Student; Pamela Tomac, Office of the Board Secretary; and various members of the community.

**Public Comment**

No members of the public provided comments.

**Consent Agenda**

Board Chair Santos moved to approve the consent agenda as presented. Trustee Rosenberg seconded the motion, and it was passed unanimously.

**Provost’s Report**

Discussing a summer recap, as well as organizational, curriculum, Provost’s Council, SB 233, and Transfer Council updates, Provost Walsh said that summer was spent working with the Educational Advisory Board (EAB) to have the Academic Performance Solutions including predictive analytics.

Provost Walsh led directors at a retreat in July and discussed compassion fatigue for students, faculty, and staff; plans have been adopted for this year. Additional topics included recommitting to the wildly important goals (WIGS); gaining efficiency in academic resource management; the impacts of the pandemic and housing costs in Ashland on faculty members; and exit interviews to help change the items within SOU’s control. Also discussed were rewarding faculty for activities that do not fit into research, scholarship, and service, and the use of Governor’s Emergency

Education Relief funding targeted for technology to upgrade 14 hybrid classrooms.

Regarding organizational updates, Dr. Jody Waters took a new position as associate provost of institutional improvement at Claremont Graduating University. Dr. Dan DeNeui is the new associate provost.

Forthcoming curricula include new majors in sustainable tourism management, music industry and production studies, and theatre performance; minors in coaching and officiating as well as marketing; and certificates in environmental communication, sports and recreation management. Trustee Vincent remarked that in the last five years, SOU has added remarkably more new certificates and programs outpacing the last 20 years. Now with 30 micro credentials, Provost Walsh agreed and said these are part of SOU's efforts to remain relevant, keep the heritage of the liberal arts, and deliver what students and employers want and need.

The Provosts' Councils from the universities and community colleges (CCs) had a retreat and discussed leveraging partnerships more effectively. Transfer SB 233 passed, so common course numbering (CCN) was a big topic. The Transfer Council met once and consists of 15 voting members with the HECC convening the meetings. The council is responsible for setting policies, considering options for transfers, and doing other work.

Answering Board Chair Santos, Provost Walsh said the Student Voices Legislation is being led by Ben Cannon so the expectation is to hear more about that soon, as the Provost's Council will be meeting with Mr. Cannon monthly. Dr. Woolf added that Jeanne Stallman is helping track that and building a group of students. Board Chair Santos observed that Teresa Alonso Leon is on the committee, who pushes out information far and wide about the important work done here. President Schott said she and Ms. Stallman met with Alonso Leon, informing her that SOU wanted to help with that work and expressed enthusiasm to serve as a resource.

### **Vice President's Report**

Dr. Woolf first announced the organizational changes, remarking that Carrie Vath, the new dean of students, will be providing an update to pandemic lessons learned later in the meeting. SOU was one of the first universities to have the benefits navigator position filled; Jason Piazza moved over from financial aid. Dr. Jesse Watson has joined as an equity coordinator for veterans and military family members, and Julia Mace is the new assistant director of recreation and wellness.

In 2021, there was a smaller cohort of students, but only 43 fewer degrees were awarded overall than previous years. The number of master's degrees increased by 6.3 percent though the graduation rate is at 41 percent, which is down from 46 percent the previous year. Board Chair Santos asked about Oregon being 41<sup>st</sup> in the nation in continuation rate, and Dr. Woolf replied that this is about normal for an institution like SOU. A one-year dip may occur but over time the graduation rate has been increasing, it is better to be more focused on a long-term trend.

Recruitment and marketing subcommittees are co-chaired by Nicolle Aleman and Zac Olson, who is working on expanding adult learning as the micro-credentials are really hot in the community. Demand builder has increased our prospective student base by a hundred thousand students each year, and giving good results. The dual admit program that was started with RCC will now be expanded to Klamath Community College (KCC), Shasta, and others in the region this year.

The parent communication has a specific portal each year and in three months last year that

group had about 1400 participants compared to this year where there were about 2000 parents joined. Not only does this allow parent issues to be resolved, but Janet Fratella's team with Ms. Aleman has also been building brand awareness. Pre-college program matriculation strategies have been another focus in the community.

Dr. Woolf met with the principals of both North and South Medford High Schools to discuss the concept of a faculty share program. This would let people know about the academic experience by introducing them to SOU faculty by starting with a lunchtime meet and greet with the high achievers. The committee to grow student success and retention's main focus this year will be how to move and improve achievement gaps, with more information about how to close those gaps later in this meeting under-enrollment.

Trustee Vincent later asked where will the markets grow and what is in the forecasting, to which Woolf said the administration performs that type of forecasting and is getting better at it. The territory management process reviews demographic data and primary through tertiary markets which can be shared at a future meeting. Trustee Vincent adds that when Oregon's land-use planning is reviewed, the jurisdictions that will have huge single-family growth forecasts lead towards the knowledge of where the multifamily and single-family homes are predicted. Another item that was noted was Umpqua Community College and KCC are about equidistant, and Trustee Vincent could see KCC students likely to drive here. Additionally, the micro-subtleties of local areas could be beneficial to recruiting students.

The financial aid committee is using Ruffalo Noel Levitz (RNL) to manage and monitor that SOU has the correct size of financial aid awards for students based on merit and need. A universal return on investment (ROI) calculator is being created to measure that focus. American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) provided \$5.2M in block grants for eligible students affected by COVID, with the added ability now to award to Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and use on SOU preexisting balances.

There is a growing national partnership with Straighter Line, an online learning provider that offers very low-cost, lower division, self-paced courses that allow students to align for transfer to SOU. This provides an easy re-entry experience for adult learners, and for those students who fall out of sequencing to realign pathway towards graduation. Academic Advancement is evaluating those courses that could benefit and supplement SOU students, and in joining the Straighter Line network of national students, SOU would become another valuable place for their transfer credits.

Peter Buckley's Southern Oregon Success (SORS) is working with Connect Oregon, a statewide referral platform for social services. In Jackson County, 61 agencies are signed up that offer services such as clothing, education, employment, food assistance, legal services, income support, and more to provide a broad depth and scope of social services. By joining the network, SOU will get 25 licenses for 25 staff to put student referrals into that system. The referral agency will provide direct support. The network is interested in the micro-credentials that SOU offers and so referrals will come our way from those people needing educational services. This will expand our network of support services. Jason Piazza, in the benefits navigator position, will be involved in this project.

Student Health and Wellness Center (SHWC) has been working 24/7 to get the campus ready for the return to campus. Large efforts went into reviewing over 3K students to verify vaccination

status, and about 300 students and staff are tested weekly. Since fall, there have been 3-4 students who tested positive.

Responding to Trustee Wilson, Dr. Woolf said the information on enrollment trends will be provided in the next agenda item.

Trustee Thalden asked where and why does the percent of students not graduating go, to which Dr. Woolf replied that all departing students are interviewed. Before they leave, the administration intervenes to ask what is going on and have found that the issues are as individual as the person. Some of the trends are lost jobs, COVID expenses, financial aid, mental health issues, families moved; it is wide-ranging. The process of intervening before they leave allows SOU to try to help those students, and the university actively recruits those students back as well. By staying in touch with those students, if an issue is found to be under our control, such as customer service relations, then that can be fixed and apologized through. There is some National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) data that provides real-time clarity. Chair Bullock added that a deeper dive on retention and graduation rates in a later meeting would be appreciated.

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

#### Fall Enrollment Overview and Completion Update, and Strategies for Closing Achievement Gaps

Dr. Woolf began by sharing the national picture that undergraduate enrollment is declining, but graduate enrollment is growing. Oregon's enrollment trends are that steep changes related to the pandemic are evident in the long-term trend, with declines for community colleges--which does not bode well for transfer students for SOU-- so partnerships will be expanded. Oregon Public Universities' (OPUs) enrollment increased or stabilized at some and fell at others. Oregon Institute of Technology declined, the University of Oregon (UO) and Oregon State University (OSU) admitted more applicants, Portland State University (PSU) dropped, and SOU is Oregon's largest Technical and Regional University (TRU).

Answering Trustee Rosenberg and Board Chair Santos, Woolf said Oregon ranks 41<sup>st</sup> in the nation at 69 percent for college continuation post-high school--it is called the competition factor. In Oregon, there are 42K high school (HS) graduates, and about 13 percent leave the state to go to college and pay more. The remaining 12K students left after the big institutions take the majority is for the smaller colleges to attract.

Providing a sense of affordability, Dr. Woolf provided an overview of parent income. For first-year Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) filers, resources are provided. Roughly 22 percent of SOU students are first-generation. Responding to Chair Bullock, Dr. Woolf replied that the income ranges are from \$0 to millions but the income range from \$100-125K is the biggest group and the next range is \$40-60K. And, though the high school GPA rose significantly, the students with 2.8 to 3.2 GPAs did not go to college this year. He reviewed SOU's fall enrollment trends—the university was down in new students, flat in total enrolled students, a mixture of increases and decreases among students by race/ethnicity, and a positive preview of the fall 2022 funnel.

Responding to Trustee Wilson, Dr. Woolf replied that it was expected to have a higher percentage drop for students of color compared to national levels, but a comparison is not available.

Responding to Trustee Vincent, Dr. Woolf said that Boise is a tertiary market. Between

northern Idaho and western Montana, some recruiting is done there but there are so many options for those students, it is a hard market.

Returning to retention, regarding grades of drop, withdraw, failure and incomplete rates, Academic Affairs is working with the Center for Advanced Learning to identify resources and close gaps. Based on a successful model with the American Samoan students who retain at higher percentages, and with Trustee Hennion's help, SOU hired Ria Galo for support, and the administration will now ask campus for additional affinity group volunteers to build those communities. Strategies will differ by groups' needs. There are over 2K parent portal users who will be invited to participate in those groups as they develop, to build communities within and outside SOU.

Responding to Trustee Thalden, Dr. Woolf commented that the plan to build those communities is to invite those on campus to participate and then start asking what is missing, what is needed, introducing the students to various people and organizations such as a faith-based groups and other community service organizations to make connections.

Board Chair Santos asked for more information on the high school GPA but lower freshman headcount. Dr. Woolf said that a financial analysis was reviewed and there is enough financial aid available, so the team is analyzing other issues. Chair Bullock offered that at the K-12 level, resources and time are limited due to COVID, such as college preparation and guidance counselors' time, and that influences the numbers. In the 2.8 to 3.2 GPA range, that group is getting left out of receiving the necessary support, and Dr. Woolf agreed that this is the group not showing up in SOU application numbers.

#### Bridge Program Update

Chair Bullock said the university has been having conversations about being a student-ready university, and why it's important now, more than ever. Provost Walsh introduced the topic noting that \$500K of funding helped support the existing, robust Bridge Program.

Dr. Danielle Hammer said the funding has allowed the expansion of the cohort, mentors and mentor training to enable greater focus on already high-risk students that reported being impacted substantially with learning loss, mental health struggles, financial losses, or the loss of a loved one due to the pandemic. The funds also will be used to work toward integrating a mental wellness component, mentor tutoring sessions, and integrating study sessions in the Bridge courses, focusing on math and writing.

Trenton Allen is an SOU sophomore and Bridge mentor. Mr. Allen shared his struggles and successes as a first-generation college student and 2nd-year mentor. He noticed a lack of socialization and social skills as students struggle to get to know each other in an online environment. He said that during the pandemic, Bridge achieved the goals of helping the students with academic and financial needs.

Bonnie Drennen is one of the first cohort members and now is a mentor-student. Ms. Drennan finds two main recurring issues. She noticed that students are uneducated as to how to get mental health assistance. Implementing more education on campus, as well as allowing students to connect with a counselor event, or other events to centralize self-care would provide learning opportunities. Ms. Drennen was fortunate because she found resources through the Bridge program, through that community of students, and with a mentor who is always there for

her. She looks forward to becoming a mentor next year. As the communications coordinator with the Bridge program, she has met with 4 high schools in the Roseburg area, drawing in at least nine students to SOU who she is helping with applications for the coming year.

Much discussion ensued among trustees and the students regarding their personal circumstances, challenges, and how Bridge has helped them with their college goals.

In concluding the item, Dr. Hammer said additional goals are to ramp up the in-person experiences and refer earlier for diagnoses and wrap-around support. Dr. Woolf noted that a pillar position for a health promotion specialist was just hired. Chair Bullock said that to be a student-ready university, it requires that each and every student is prepared.

### Positive Pandemic Programming

Continuing the spring conversation with the committee and recognizing the good work happening on campus, Vice President Woolf and Provost Walsh discussed “lessons learned.” These include conversions to paperless processes; better forms of communication; more electronic delivery of information; improved standards for service delivery; higher-quality prospective student engagement; greater prospective student participation; virtual high school/community college visits with farther reach; virtual one-on-one appointments with admissions counselors; virtual information sessions targeted at traditional, transfer, territory- specific, and adult learner populations; virtual application workshops with “admissions on the spot,” and more.

Under the “employer of choice” efforts, positives include the hybrid work environment; disaster-proofing operations; more individual flexibility and attention; higher levels of care and concern; and increased bonds of loyalty and teamwork. Responding to Trustee Rosenberg’s inquiry regarding possible problems in this area, President Schott said that she has not heard any and would need more data, and added that some employees told her directly that they felt the university handled the furloughs and unemployment benefits well, enabling people to stay employed. The consensus was that everyone’s health and safety have been a top priority.

Much discussion ensued among trustees regarding national trends in workforce shortages; related turnover and the exodus of employees across industries; some high school graduates going straight into the workforce as jobs are paying higher; academic institutions being affected as much as industries with shortages; and a desire to understand how this trend is affecting the SOU workforce. Board Chair Santos and Committee Chair Bullock asked to receive information for SOU in this area.

Trustee Thalden commented that he believes the next step is to take advantage of what has been learned by doing more online teaching and learning, perhaps with SOU inviting well-respected teachers from other countries.

### Academic Performance Solutions (APS)

In June, Dr. Karen Stone and Chris Stanek talked to the committee about the Academic Program Planning Toolkit, of which APS is a part. Dr. Vincent Smith joined to discuss APS and demonstrate the tool. Academic Performance Solutions (APS) is a decision-support platform that enables individuals across institutional departments to easily access data and peer benchmarks around course offerings, faculty workload, course completion rates, department-level costs, and other key performance indicators.

Dr. Stone reported that APS allows the division directors access to data to make efficient, informed decisions from monitoring valuable information such as enrollments, class planning, student credit hours, fill rate, and course completion rates. The APS tool helps the bottom line by providing information about using faculty as a resource, hiring decisions, and timely progression to graduation and completion.

Chris Stanek said the tool provides fantastic long trend analyses with five-year data uploaded to the system. It provides comparative data against other schools like SOU to identify challenges; delivers a single source of the data, where in the past there were multiple data systems to search for information; and it helps to organize the data to connect financial and academic priorities. Mr. Stanek presented dashboards of the types of information APS can provide.

Dr. Smith explained that programs are reviewed every third year. The goal is to have dependable data for program chairs to be able to act nimbly opportunities are identified. Dr. Smith demonstrated the tool and showed several examples of how data has been utilized.

President Schott said this tool will provide helpful data for enrollment management and ensuring the curriculum students want. Board Chair Santos thanked everyone for their work.

#### Proposed 2022-2023 Committee Meeting Schedule (Action)

Last year, the committee approved the 2022 schedule, and today is being asked to approve the 2023 schedule so the board can maintain a projected 2-year calendar. Trustee Rosenberg encouraged the committee to ensure there were no conflicts with the Jewish holy days. There being none, Board Chair Santos moved to adopt the committee meeting schedule as proposed. Trustee Thalden seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

#### **Future Meetings**

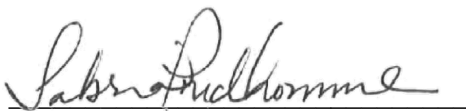
The committee's next meeting will be on Thursday, January 20, 2022.

#### **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 3:20 p.m.

Date: January 20, 2022

Respectively submitted by,



Sabrina Prud'homme  
University Board Secretary