

Academic Programs: Graduate and Undergraduate Briefing

BACKGROUND

As in prior years, we provide updates on key metrics of student success, report on the progress of ongoing initiatives, and describe enrollment trends in more detail than the top-line numbers. With the university strategic planning process underway and both the Jen-Hsun and Lori Wang Collaborative Innovation Complex and the Patricia Valian Reser Center for the Performing Arts in development, this document describes emerging opportunities in academic program planning and their connections to areas of transdisciplinary research. In January, the ASC received a briefing from the Research Office describing new initiatives to advance transdisciplinary research. These have complementary activities in academic programs and initiatives, described below.

ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

Recently launched programs - undergraduate

The BS in Marine Studies launched in 2021 has 74 enrolled students, and the BS in Creative Writing launched in 2020 has 148, including 19 at OSU-Cascades (many students have switched from the English major). During 2020-21 the Earth Sciences degree was split into Climate Science, Geology and Oceanography, and those programs have current enrollments of 41, 83 and 60, respectively. Two new Ecampus-only undergraduate degrees, one in Applied Humanities (launched 2021) and the other in Contemporary Music Industry (launched 2020), are getting off to slower starts. Similarly, the Political Science and Economics undergraduate degrees started to be offered at OSU-Cascades in 2022 need more time to garner enrollments.

Recently launched programs - graduate and professional

The new Doctor of Physical Therapy program at OSU-Cascades enrolled its second cohort of students in Fall 2022 bringing the total enrollment to 87. Other new programs include the MS in Business (enrollment 104), Data Analytics (98), and Artificial Intelligence (27).

A focus on strengthening transdisciplinarity

Disciplines and the academic units (departments, schools, colleges) that support them are foundational to the strength of universities. This comes in the form of 1) their intellectual attributes – theories, methods, knowledge discovered and created; 2) the vehicles for organizing and advancing knowledge, viz., journals, scholarly societies, awards, and promotion and tenure; and 3) the academic programs, especially graduate programs, that train the next generation of scholars.

But many of the world's most pressing problems can only be solved or ameliorated through deeply integrated application of knowledge from a variety of fields, in collaboration with experts outside of academia: in short, through transdisciplinarity. *Interdisciplinary* is sometimes defined as a deep collaboration among scholars of different fields who achieve shared insights that bridge fields; *transdisciplinary* teams often include participants from outside academia, and together generate relevant knowledge and solutions to societal challenges. OSU is perhaps better than most universities in sustaining strong interdisciplinary collaborations within the university, as evidenced by recent large awards catalogued in the Research Office briefings, and is actively building transdisciplinary skills in our faculty and transdisciplinary collaborations

beyond the university. We have vibrant interdisciplinary academic programs in Environmental Sciences (both undergraduate and graduate, UG & G), Natural Resources (U), Public Policy (UG & G), Robotics (G), Materials Science (G), Sustainability (U, double degree), Water Resources (G), Marine Studies (UG), Marine Resources Management (G), and Bioengineering (UG & G). Dozens of faculty members are currently working to create a new graduate program in data science, tentatively called applied data science, which will be strongly connected with applications in fields as diverse as liberal arts and health and which will align well with the new CIC. Another effort is underway to create an interdisciplinary undergraduate program in Engineering Design for Society.

Faculty and students involved in interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary work learn intellectual flexibility and gain key new insights; interdisciplinary students in lab groups bring expertise and insights from other fields; interdisciplinary thinking melds discipline-based knowledges, leveraging their strengths to tackle complex real-world problems, and amplifying their value and impact. Effective collaboration on interdisciplinary teams is a much-sought transferrable skill in many workplaces. Federal research funding is increasingly interdisciplinary; interdisciplinary programs connect faculty from different disciplines, enabling them to develop the skills to propose strong interdisciplinary proposals, demonstrate to funding agencies that OSU has the collaborative networks and experience to succeed, and bring in interdisciplinary students to support that research. For these and many other reasons, the academic programs and research enterprise at OSU are pursuing new ways to improve our successes and lower barriers to interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary work. Even the new general education program, currently being implemented, has a new category called Seeking Solutions, in which interdisciplinary students will work together in teams to address challenging problems.

Looking to the future, in addition to the Applied Data Sciences program, OSU will be looking for strategic opportunities to capitalize on national trends and meet the changing needs of Oregon's private and public sectors. Nationally, the largest growth area in degree conferrals (especially graduate degrees) is in the health professions, an area in which Oregon has not kept pace with demand. As the new DPT program at OSU-Cascades illustrates, OSU can develop and launch successful programs to support needs in health, especially allied health disciplines.

STUDENT SUCCESS METRICS

Undergraduate

We continue to track our progress on key student success metrics, see Table 1. We have made progress toward reaching 90% for first-year retention and we have reached 70% for six-year graduation, though we still need to close equity gaps. The data in Table 1 are based on freshman cohorts, and we also track performance of transfer students, a growing proportion of the undergraduate population. First-year retention among transfer students entering fall term is lower than for the freshman cohort (76.8% in 2022, versus 86.8% for the freshman cohort). Similarly, the four-year graduation rate for transfer students (61.4% in 2022) is substantially lower than the six-year graduation rate of the freshman cohort (70%), though direct comparisons of these groups can be challenging.

Table 1 — Oregon State University Undergraduate Student Success Metrics

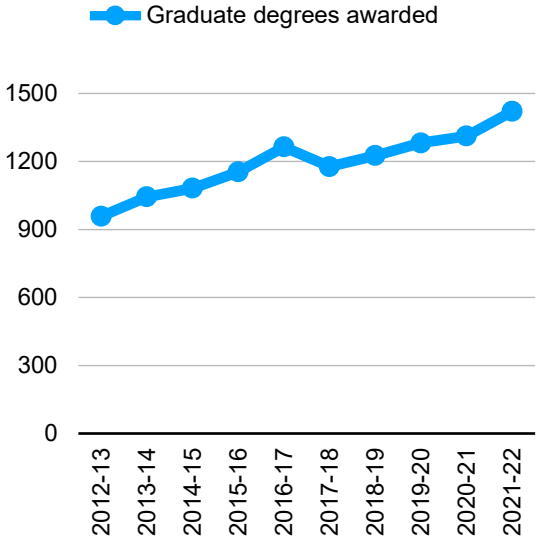
Updated November 2021

	1 Year Retention Rate (%)			6 Year Graduation Rate (%)		
	2012	2017	2022	2012	2017	2022
Overall OSU	83.4	84.8	86.8	60.4	65.3	70.0
Pell	79.9	79.7	81.2	57.2	59.0	62.1
Non-Pell	85.9	87.4	88.4	62.1	70.0	73.8
Pell – Non-Pell Gap	-6.0	-7.7	-7.2	-4.9	-11.0	-11.7
URM	81.1	77.6	81.4	52.2	57.2	60.0
Non – URM	83.6	86.0	87.7	61.1	66.3	71.6
URM – Non-URM Gap	-2.5	-8.4	-6.3	-8.9	-9.1	-11.6
Male	82.3	84.6	86.9	57.7	61.5	67.0
Female	84.5	85.1	86.7	63.2	69.5	73.1
Male – Female Gap	-2.2	-0.5	0.2	-5.5	-8.0	-6.1
Nonresident	83.9	81.4	83.5	61.9	66.9	64.9
Oregon Resident	83.2	86.2	88.7	60.2	64.8	72.0
Nonresident – Resident Gap	0.7	-4.8	-5.2	1.7	2.1	-7.1
First-Generation	80.3	79.3	80.2	N/A	60.3	62.3
Not First-Generation	84.4	86.5	87.5	N/A	67.2	72.2
First-Generation Gap	-4.1	-7.2	-7.3	N/A	-6.9	-9.9

Cohorts are for first-time college, full-time degree-seeking undergraduates admitted for the designated fall term or preceding summer term. 2012, 2017 and 2022 one-year retention rates are for students entering in 2011, 2016 and 2021, respectively. 2012, 2017 and 2022 six-year graduation rates are for students entering in 2006, 2011 and 2016, respectively. First-generation status was not collected on application before 2010. **Red typeface indicates areas that need improvement.**

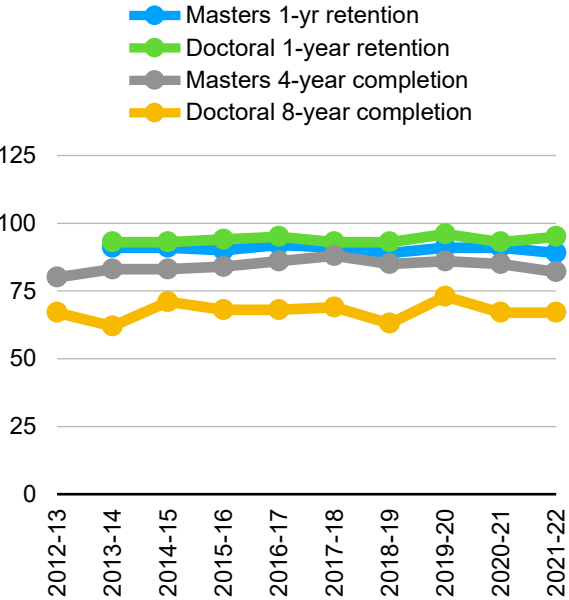
Graduate

Consistent with trends reported last year, graduate degree completions (see Figure) continued to rise to a new record of over 1,400 in 2021-22 despite the setbacks of the pandemic. Retention of masters students has fluctuated around 90% and doctoral around 94% over the past approximately eight years. Masters' completions (within four years) rose to a high of 88% in AY17-18 before beginning a slow decline, in part because of an increasing mix of Ecampus students who tend to have lower four-year completion rates. Doctoral completions (within eight years) have generally been 67-68% in most years; they reached a peak of 73% in AY19-20 before returning to more typical levels in the two years since.



ACADEMIC UNIT ASSESSMENT

The Provost's Office has replaced the process of reviewing individual academic programs with a process for reviewing each academic college and its constituent units (departments and schools), if any. The AUA process reviews enrollments and demographics in each academic program in the college and unit, student success according to several metrics, diversity metrics and actions, research productivity, and resource efficiency. Heightened attention to learning outcome assessments is expected to lead to more rapid improvements in curricular, pedagogical, and evaluative aspects of each program. Substantial new data dashboards have been developed to support the assessments, which are taking place in AY22-23 and will lead to action plans to be executed in AY23-24, and some plans will include external reviews of programs or departments.



UNIVERSITY ACCREDITATION AND PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

OSU's Mid-cycle Self-evaluation Report was submitted to the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities in March 2022 and a (virtual) site-visit by the review committee occurred in April. After the April site-visit the NWCCU requested that we submit an Ad Hoc report and undergo another site visit in 2023. The Commission requested better evidence of our work in response to two recommendations resulting from our seven-year evaluation in 2019. The recommendations are that we (1) use the results of student learning outcomes assessment more consistently for improvement by informing planning, decision-making and allocation of resources and capacity, and (2) have clear alignment of program learning outcomes and benchmarks for those learning outcomes across our different delivery modalities and locations. We submitted the Ad Hoc report in February and we have a scheduled site-visit by a single evaluator on April 6.

ACCESS TO ELSEVIER JOURNALS

After extensive negotiations with Elsevier over the bundling and pricing of journals made little progress on OSU's goals for the contract, the university decided to pause negotiations, with the expectation of returning to the negotiating table in the summer of 2023.

As expected, Elsevier cut off OSU's subscription access to paywalled journals on January 1, 2023. OSU librarians have done a number of things to mitigate the effect of this pause on researchers and students, including: standing up an on-demand Article Delivery Service, expanding access to content in non-Elsevier databases, and securing continuing access to articles published between 1997 and 2022 in more than 250 high-use journals. Librarians are gathering and analyzing input from the colleges and usage data so that they can secure a curated list of journal titles that complements the library's on-demand services, with the goal of aligning spending more closely with actual usage. These are steps OSU must take to ensure a sustainable future for scholarly communication that reflects both the value of the contributions OSU researchers make to scholarly publishing, and the rapid growth of open scholarship.

SPECIAL INITIATIVES

Undergraduate

Academic Advising Review

The university initiated a review of undergraduate academic advising practices in Fall 2022. The review involved self-evaluations of advising structures within the colleges and at OSU-Cascades and well as academic coaching services provided through Ecampus and the Division of Student Affairs. We also engaged two consultants from NACADA, The Global Community for Academic Advising, who visited the Corvallis campus at the end of January. We are awaiting a final report from these consultants and then we will prepare a set of recommendations to discuss with the advising community and college leaders.

New General Education Curriculum Implementation

During fall 2022 and into Winter 2023, faculty groups met to create Learning Outcomes, Criteria and Rationales (LOCR) for the categories in the new general education curriculum. The summary LOCR document will go to Faculty Senate for approval at its April meeting. Upon approval of the LOCR, changes to existing courses and development of new courses can begin in earnest. We are bringing in new staff at the Center for Teaching and Learning to develop course design trainings and other resources for faculty as they modify existing courses and develop new courses.

Common Course Numbering

The statewide effort to align 100- and 200-level courses transferred in high volume among Oregon community colleges and public universities is underway as mandated by Senate Bill 233, passed in the 2021 legislative session. The first round of ten courses in the new common course numbering system are now making its way through curriculum management processes at the various institutions in Oregon including OSU. A new set of faculty subcommittees to the statewide Transfer Council are being charged to begin work on the second round of courses.

This second round includes the calculus sequence, and sequences of English, psychology and business courses.

Course Learning Outcomes Project

With myriad curriculum changes underway, we are also undertaking a project to ensure all OSU courses are recorded in the Curriculum Inventory Management system with up-to-date course learning outcomes. Whenever a faculty member changes a course learning outcome

Financial Readiness for all Students

To launch in Academic Year 2024 (starting Summer 2023), OSU is creating an infrastructure to support students in being financially prepared to attend and stay in college. Focused on financial wellbeing, this project endeavors to ensure students are financially prepared to be in school but also prepared to leave school with low debt and a stronger financial awareness as they begin their careers. In practice, this means that OSU will provide all students with access to financial literacy education module as part of their transition to OSU. The module will be offered to new and current students, and in collaboration with the Center for Advancing Financial Education, we will make targeted outreach to those students who need additional support. With support from CAFE staff, students will be able to create their own financial plans. We will also create installment plans for students to pay their tuition across longer periods of time than is currently allowed, and we will reduce the amount of debt to OSU a student can carry before proceeding to the next term. By Fall of 2024, if not before, we will discontinue the policy of not releasing transcripts if student owe money to OSU.

Student Experience Customer Relationship Management System

Implementation of the new student experience CRM is well underway, and the project is on schedule for students to begin using the tool in summer 2023. Four student interns have been actively engaged with the implementation team, helping to test user interfaces and functionality as well as offering up suggestions for branding the new tool. Substantial user training on the tool will begin during spring term.

Graduate

The Graduate School and its partners in the colleges continue to pursue ways to provide a more equitable and inclusive graduate education. Ongoing efforts include strongly encouraging programs to adopt a [holistic approach to admissions](#) including targeted application questions; [training faculty in mentorship](#) using the Center for Mentored Experiences in Research, as described in last year's briefing, in which about 30% of OSU's faculty have already participated after just over a year; and the [OSU Grad Advantage](#) package of opportunities to develop transferrable skills.

New this year is a transitional program at the end of summer for arriving graduate students, called [Summer Step](#). Modeled on [the undergraduate equivalent](#), it supports the acclimation and success of graduate students who identify with historically marginalized communities.

Efforts continue to integrate documents important in the student journey with OSU's online systems, to provide a smoother, easier experience. The new Student CRM introduces opportunities to recruit and support graduate students.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Alternative credentials, credit for prior learning and other degree pathways
- Continued interest in Ecampus and distance learning
- Federal funding and state opportunity related to the CHIPS Act
- Professional Science Masters degrees, both in person and through Ecampus
- Growth in inter- and transdisciplinary research and education
- Experimentation with programming at OSU-Cascades

THREATS

- Legislation around Applied Baccalaureate degrees for Oregon's Community Colleges
- Continued low state support for four-year public universities in Oregon (9th lowest per student, in the US)
- Continued narratives of distrust in and devaluation of higher education