

Student Life and Success Briefing

BACKGROUND

This report provides a snapshot of initiatives that directly contribute to advancing student access and success in the context of Prosperity Widely Shared, as well as updates on previously reported priorities tied to emerging student life issues. Areas of focus — which support the strategic goal for every student to graduate — include increasing student housing, implementing a new strategy for early care and education for OSU parents, adding programming to OSUWelcome, revising academic advising processing, and launching new initiatives such as AI@OSU and Finish in Four.

PROGRESS AND METRICS RELATED TO PROSPERITY WIDELY SHARED

Strategic Plan Goal: Every Student Graduates

Oregon State University aims for every undergraduate student to complete their education, recognizing that they want and deserve to achieve successful outcomes. This commitment is reflected in the strategic plan, Prosperity Widely Shared (PWS), which emphasizes accountability and collaboration across academic and administrative units. The university has built a novel organizational architecture to drive toward the goals and targets set forth in PWS. This involves a university-wide Every Student Graduates (ESG) team charged with facilitating cross-cutting goals and strategies across locations and learning modalities, supporting colleges in implementing interventions, and collaborating with university partners for metrics, target setting and messaging. College Leadership Teams (CLTs) within each college focus on their respective student success efforts, and are accountable for creating and executing plans, collaborating with ESG, and reporting their progress. As emerging priorities and barriers are identified, priority-based groups of practitioners across OSU are assembled to advance particular projects determined by ESG in consultation with university partners. These are intended to be time-bound and action-oriented. Collaboration and communication occur through quarterly meetings between CLTs and ESG, regular updates to stakeholders across the university, and annual summits to showcase efforts and solicit feedback.

Housing and Dining Vision

Oregon State University has developed a comprehensive Corvallis Campus Housing and Dining Vision to transform the housing and dining experience over the next decade. The vision calls for diversifying the housing unit mix to better serve upper-division and graduate students, building new residence halls, modernizing and upgrading existing residence halls, and investing in enhanced dining facilities to create vibrant community hubs. Recognizing the need to quickly grow on-campus housing capacity to respond to existing and future demand, OSU aims to increase the bed count from 5,000 today to 7,500 within 10 years, helping to support student recruitment and success and allowing for sustainable OSU enrollment growth that is currently constrained by the Corvallis housing shortage. Woven throughout the vision is a commitment to providing consistently high-quality residential experiences and offering developmentally appropriate living options to foster student engagement, community, and well-being. Under the direction of Provost and Executive Vice President Edward Feser, University Housing & Dining Services; University Facilities, Infrastructure, and Operations; and the Division of Finance and Administration are collaborating on the implementation of the first phase of the

vision. It is anticipated that OSU will have selected a design team to begin prototyping phase one buildings beginning summer 2024. University Land Use Planning continues its work with the City of Corvallis to implement Land Development Code changes that will make this and future development processes more streamlined. Assuming all approvals, including approval by the OSU Board of Trustees, and processes proceed as planned, new buildings from phase one are expected to open in 2027.

Diversity Action Plan Implementation

Aligned implementation of the Diversity Action Plan (DAP) and PWS has begun. Working with the *Every Student Graduates* team, the coordinating group for the PWS student success domain, the Office of Institutional Diversity is mapping DAP tactics and initiatives to the PWS action to “launch a campaign for timely undergraduate degree completion” to track progress, adopt shared metrics and create accountability. A matrix has been developed to facilitate this coordination, which will likely be a model for other strategic plan domains. The Office of Institutional Diversity will continue to work closely with university partners to continue to integrate implementation and accountability for both plans, which will ensure the greatest opportunity to advance inclusive excellence as a normal, anticipated expectation of the university’s highest priorities.

OSUWelcome

As a direct result of deliberate collaboration between the Division of Student Affairs and other administrative and academic units, this fall, OSUWelcome saw an increase in campus-wide involvement and a greater array of programming for students. Program enhancements responded to the increase in enrollment and the unique needs of new students joining the university community. For example, OSU built a new academic onboarding experience for incoming students. All new students were expected to attend this three-hour orientation session that focused on preparing them for the academic transition to OSU. Each three-hour block consisted of an 80-minute keynote with a panel of current students and two 40-minute breakout sessions on a range of topics including study abroad, studying in STEM courses, library tours, and more. Over 74% of the incoming first-year and transfer students attended the new orientation event. This cross-campus effort was led by the Office of Academic Support and plans are underway to offer it again in fall 2024.

Early Care and Education Strategy

One of the enabling conditions for bolstering student support in alignment with PWS is strengthening local early care and education (ECE) capacity. OSU has developed a ten-year ECE expansion plan to include two incremental ECE centers in Corvallis, two incremental ECE centers at OSU-Cascades, and one ECE center at the Hatfield Marine Science Center in Newport. Extramural funding through the state Child Care Infrastructure Fund (HB3005) will be applied for in support of these capital construction projects.

As these projects proceed, OSU is also transitioning to self-operate its centers. OSU self-operated early care and education enables stronger, well-articulated connections with the School of Human Development and Family Sciences in support of degree-seeking students and the opportunity for local, state, and federal funding subsidy opportunities.

At the state-level, OSU's Family Resource Center (FRC) has been a leader for advancing the field of ECE, in part by launching and leading the statewide Higher Education Early Learning Partnership of Oregon (HEELPO) and by engaging in key areas of ECE workforce development. The FRC has also drafted the first statewide ECE Policy Option Package (POP) for higher education, submitted to the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) in early April by the seven public universities as part of the 2025 Consolidated Funding Request. The POP proposes \$15 million for the applicable public universities (including OSU) over the 2025-2027 biennium. For OSU, new funding would address: ECE operational funding, increased FTE in HDFS degree programs, and scholarship and grant funding for HDFS degree-seeking students.

Academic Advising Strategy

OSU has collaboratively developed a new long-term vision for academic advising. This vision includes a newly developed organizational structure to address concerns and barriers in advising that negatively impact students, as well as a plan and timeline for rollout. This was a highly consultative process with involvement from the academic advising community, deans, associate deans, Academic Advising Council leadership, and University Human Resources. From the evaluative process, three priority areas were identified that negatively impact the experience undergraduate students have with academic advising and academic counseling at OSU. These areas include the advising structure; training and professional development; and data and systems management.

The newly designed organizational structure will address these priority areas by producing the following outcomes: consistency in advising practices across colleges while recognizing the unique needs of students who are new to OSU; close collaboration between college leadership supported centrally; an improved advising experience for students; shared responsibility and accountability with a system structure of quality assurance and improvement; and onboarding and ongoing professional development. OSU is on track for approval of the structure in early April with a plan for implementation by end of spring 2025.

General Education Reform

Core Education, a groundbreaking general curriculum, is set to launch in 2025 as OSU's new, state-of-the-art, general education program. In support of PWS and OSU's land-grant mission, Core Education is comprised of the Foundational and Signature Core and is specifically designed for 21st century learners and graduates to contribute as members of an interconnected and complex global society. What sets OSU apart is that it is the first university in the state to

redesign its curriculum to meet the needs of our growing transfer student population. This approach makes OSU a trailblazer in the national general education landscape as well. Students can complete a specific degree at an Oregon community college, transfer to OSU, and have 30 credits in the Foundational Core curriculum completed.

OSU's Signature Core, a unique feature of Core Education, is designed to promote professional and personal success. Key requirements of the Signature Core that are directly in support of the values, goals, and actions of PWS include:

- **Transitions:** This course is designed to reduce hidden barriers that inhibit success and build community.
- **Beyond OSU Career Integration:** Beyond OSU connects and articulates the Core Education curriculum, academic majors, and co-curricular experiences into career readiness and career advancement skills that employers and universities have deemed necessary to succeed in the working world.
- **Difference, Power, and Oppression Advanced:** This upper-division and field-specific course engages students in critical reflection on the complexity of the structures, institutions, and ideologies that sustain systemic oppression, discrimination, and the inequitable distribution of systemic power and resources within and across communities.
- **Seeking Solutions:** This course seeks to have students wrestle with complex, multifaceted problems, and work to solve them and evaluate potential solutions from multiple points of view.

Beaver Hub: The Enterprise-Wide Student Experience CRM

In summer 2023, OSU implemented the new student-facing customer relationship management (CRM) tool, Beaver Hub. This cross-institutional implementation effort is a first step into having a deeper, 360-degree understanding of the student experience and will fundamentally change the ways in which OSU is able to communicate with and support students. The next phase of the implementation involves stabilizing the ongoing operational structure and establishing the needed ongoing partnerships across technical and functional areas that will allow for continued iteration and development. One critical effort currently underway involves laying the groundwork for communication policy and governance as OSU introduces new enterprise-level communication capabilities, which is being led by the Coordinated Communications group.

The Coordinated Communications group will continue to evaluate and establish processes that support the ongoing utilization of Beaver Hub communication tools. Long-term goals include strategically reducing communications that are not useful to students; personalizing content and sharing meaningful information; and using communications and the Beaver Hub platform to enhance student persistence and graduation.

Improving Underrepresented Student Success Outcomes

As OSU seeks opportunities to improve and scale high-impact opportunities for students from marginalized populations, such as bridge experiences and academic counseling, OSU has created an updated structure to strengthen collaboration and enhance the student experience. There are several programs that operate with some distinct similarities, like bridge experiences and academic counseling, but with some unique and important facets that differentiate them. These programs include the Educational Opportunities Program (EOP), TRiO Student Support Services, LSAMP, and CAMP. They previously operated under two separate organizations

based on lines of funding (EOP being E&G funded, and the others grant funded) rather than organizational alignment. To enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of these organizations, they are being consolidated into one comprehensive organization under the EOP umbrella.

The consolidation of these departments leads to a more cohesive and streamlined delivery of services to students from underrepresented backgrounds such as first-generation students, students of color, and underrepresented students in STEM fields. This enhanced coordination between programs and services aims to facilitate smoother transitions, fostering greater academic success, increased developmental opportunities, and higher retention rates in support of the PWS target of equalizing retention and graduation rates.

This strategic move allows for enhanced support for grant-funded programs by covering expenses for essential services and resources that may not be fully funded by grants. Cost savings resulting from this effort will also yield cost savings, which can then be reallocated to provide increased support, staffing, and programs within the organization. By bolstering financial support across the organization, OSU aims to enhance staff retention rates and promote the stability of key professionals, while also ensuring pay equity for both staff and student employees in alignment with the standards set by the Division of Student Affairs.

Additionally, this new organizational configuration will facilitate more comprehensive needs assessments, collective feedback mechanisms, and a deeper understanding of student experiences as OSU increases access and achieve greater six-year graduation rates. Through this restructured framework, OSU is committed to enhancing and expanding high-impact opportunities for students from marginalized populations. By unifying programs with similar objectives, but distinct characteristics, the aim is to create a more cohesive and effective support system for all students.

Career Competencies and Career Readiness: Advancing Beyond OSU

Beyond OSU is an institutional approach that builds career readiness and development into the student experience. Through career preparation and experiences, all students will develop skills and gain connections to help them achieve their goals. To provide more effective and comprehensive tailored career support, three more positions have been created as a collaborative effort between the Career Development Center (CDC) and colleges. Nearly all undergraduate colleges now have a fully dedicated role to advance career development for their students.

Additionally, the CDC has been actively engaged in the development and implementation of the new Core Education. The Beyond OSU requirement is intended to incorporate career development into the curriculum, thereby ensuring that every student has the skills and knowledge needed to find meaningful work in their field or advance in their current career after completing their academic journey at OSU. By requiring career development as part of the undergraduate curriculum, OSU is a leader in demonstrating how to support all students' career goals. To this end, the CDC led the Beyond OSU Course Design Institute for the new Core Education and worked with every college to determine a strategy for implementation. Additionally, two modules have been developed for the Transitions courses that focus on career exploration.

The CDC, in partnership with University Human Resources, has developed a position that will focus on transforming student employment opportunities into professional development learning experience, rather than a part-time job. Students will be intentionally connected to the NACE competencies and learn about how their work aligns with the skills needed in their future career goal. This position is now in the recruitment phase with the new approach launching in late 2023-2024.

Free Expression and Academic Freedom Committee

In fall 2023, Provost Feser charged a steering committee on free expression and academic freedom to:

- Create opportunities for OSU community members to explore rights and responsibilities associated with free expression and academic freedom in higher education settings.
- Develop capacity for the university community to engage in dialogue, debate, deliberation and productive disagreement on topics of significance.
- Raise awareness of university policies, practices and resources supporting free expression and academic freedom.
- Explore the relationship between advancing OSU's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion and safeguarding free expression and academic freedom.

The steering committee, inclusive of student leaders, is currently developing strategies to engage the university community on topics likely to arise during the fall 2024 election season. A website will also be created to make resources centrally available, outline opportunities for professional development and provide answers to FAQs.

Mental Health and Well-being

To assess and improve the mental health of its students, the College of Engineering (COE) approached Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS) to collaborate. COE is a community considered by CAPS as being at high risk for mental health challenges, given the academic stressors they experience and the higher rates of mental health stigma in STEM fields of study. The goal of this effort was to assess the college climate, student experience, and mental health needs of COE and develop an action plan to address these college-specific needs and improve student mental health outcomes. This project included surveys and focus group data and analysis for students and employees within the college, which were used to guide the identification of improvement priorities and an evidence-informed action plan to address risk factors and protective factors identified through these efforts. A multidisciplinary advisory board, including student representatives, was the driving force for these efforts and the charge was to expand beyond individual-level factors such as knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs to address student mental health impacts at multiple levels of influence.

The three priorities identified through this project are: 1) academic practices (ex: evaluating workloads and conflicting deadlines for mandatory courses taken within the same term), 2) college culture and classroom climate practices (e.g., framing teaching faculty expectations to include checking in on student mental health and serving as a connection to resources), and 3) personal well-being (e.g., expanding mental health workshop and group therapy offerings, including identity-specific and graduate student offerings). Each of these priorities has evidence-informed actions and policy recommendations to improve the student experience. CAPS will continue to partner and consult with COE in the implementation and evaluation of the action plan over the next three to five years.

This project has served as a pilot to inform the process for a mental health landscape analysis that is currently underway for OSU-Corvallis, OSU-Cascades, and Ecampus. These three task forces are engaging in collaborative survey development and collection, focus group facilitation, and service reviews to collect data and information that will help guide the development of a strategic action plan to improve the mental well-being of all OSU students.

CAPS has also been engaged in the collaborative creation of a mental health module that will be embedded within the new Transitions course in the Core Education reform effort. This will provide all incoming students with foundational knowledge on recognizing concepts and personal strategies related to noticing, naming, and normalizing thoughts and emotions; demonstrating an understanding of growth mindset through a personal lens and identifying how it supports students in their OSU journey; recognizing and identifying the signs of distress in self and peers; and identifying a personal mental well-being plan including goals and resources to increase awareness, resilience, and support.

Health and Wellness

Student Health Services (SHS) has successfully moved into the new Health Center on the Corvallis campus, which provides a state-of-the-art health care environment. In addition to the improved experience and service for students, SHS partners with Samaritan Health Services on Health Center operations to offer after-hours and weekend service through SamCare Express, employee primary care, as well as pharmacy services within the nearby Samaritan Athletic Medicine building.

In summer 2023, the OSU-Cascades Health & Wellness team began reporting to Student Health Services. To facilitate the organizational realignment, positions have been shifted to align with SHS organizational structure, and the budget aligned with short- and long-term goals. The integration of the Health & Wellness team under Student Health Services at OSU-Cascades has significantly enhanced the student experience. With a comprehensive care team encompassing counseling, nursing, and health promotion, students benefit from a holistic approach to health and wellness. This alignment ensures continuity of care and support, bolstered by the extensive resources from the Corvallis campus. The addition of nursing services at OSU-Cascades represents a substantial improvement, offering students on-site access to essential health care services. The team is now fully staffed with a part-time nurse, assistant director of counseling, and student wellness coordinator.

NEW PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES

Finish in Four

Oregon State University has initiated a new student success campaign in collaboration with the OSU Foundation aptly named Finish in Four. This pioneering scholarship program is tailored to address the financial needs of Oregon's students with the highest financial need. While OSU students from financially constrained backgrounds may qualify for federal and state grants, the cumulative expenses including tuition, room, board, textbooks, and other essentials often surpass the coverage provided by their financial aid packages. In fact, the average unmet need for students reliant on financial assistance averages \$13,500 annually. Through this initiative, low-income Oregon resident students will have the opportunity to secure four-year scholarships that substantially mitigate the financial burden associated with attending college.

The program goes beyond just financial assistance but aims to serve students in thriving and flourishing in the undergraduate experience. Participants of Finish in Four will benefit from a supportive cohort framework fostering a sense of belonging, supplemented by immersive and high-impact experiential learning opportunities woven throughout their academic journey. Moreover, they will receive instruction in financial literacy alongside personalized academic counseling.

Key personnel have been designated to oversee program coordination to ensure an intentional, developmental, and informative process. Although the substantial funding requisite for the full implementation of Finish in Four may not be available by fall 2024, the intention is to conduct a soft launch of the program, accommodating as many students as possible by reallocating High Promise Scholar funds and leveraging existing structures within the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) during the inaugural year.

Leveraging AI in Student Success

While AI is often discussed as an integral part of OSU's research agenda, AI is starting to be utilized throughout the university in ways that enable better service to students. This is just the beginning; the success of PWS is dependent on OSU's ability to redesign student support in areas like admissions, financial aid, and advising to respond to routine and regular inquiries instantly with AI systems, leaving critical in-person interactions to help solve problems that are new, unique, or highly contextual in nature. Almost all student support systems are designed for in-person campuses whose primary means for student support is face-to-face interactions.

Effectively utilizing AI systems to support student success is key, given that one of the [top five targets of PWS](#) is to increase online-only enrollment to 30,000 by 2030.

At a high level, the AI@OSU Advisory Group is considering the implications and best use of AI in the areas of teaching, research, and business operations from an enterprise-wide perspective; helping to ensure responsible, transparent, and ethical AI systems; and reviewing existing risk management practices and recommending appropriate updates to them. This group is surveying students and employees in spring term to gain a sense of the overall climate at the university. The following represent some concrete examples of how AI is being leveraged in support of student success.

- A perennial complaint from students is that they are unable to register for a course or courses they need to make timely progress in completing their degree. This problem arises at the confluence of insufficient data on student academic plans, overlapping time slots for necessary courses, and academic unit constraints on instructional faculty availability in the modalities needed by students. OSU is envisioning an AI tool to assist academic units in creating optimal sequences of course offerings, with appropriate numbers of sections, across modalities and locations, all with the goal of timely degree completion.
- Ecampus has been using AI solutions to improve its communication practices. For example, in email campaigns to prospective students, Ecampus is working to adjust the time of day for communications to best reflect the individuals' preferences. To both scale and decrease response times to prospective student inquiries, Ecampus has upgraded from live chat to a generative AI chatbot named EVA (campus Virtual Assistant) that operates 24/7 to answer prospective and current student inquiries. Most of the conversation topics in the first week of use included questions about admissions and the application process, costs, program information and how to register for courses.

Re-envisioning Student Onboarding

OSU is committed to creating a transformative educational journey marked by academic success, personal growth, and community engagement through the onboarding experience of undergraduate students. To achieve this, OSU has tasked a dedicated task force with designing a signature New Student Onboarding (NSO) experience. This charge aims to facilitate the seamless transition of new students into college life while promoting academic achievement, engagement, and retention. Through collaboration with various stakeholders, the task force will design an inclusive and tailored onboarding experience, considering the diverse needs of OSU's undergraduate population, including adult learners, transfer students, and those enrolled in online programs.

The proposal encompasses three phases: Learning Outcomes and Architecture, Program Development, and Implementation, with a timeline set for implementation by June 2025. Key components include defining clear learning goals aligned with OSU's mission and focus on Every Student Graduates in the university strategic plan, developing a structured curriculum integrating academic and co-curricular activities, fostering a sense of belonging and community, and establishing assessment metrics for program effectiveness. Through these efforts, OSU aims to provide new students with a supportive and enriching introduction to university life, setting the stage for their academic success and personal development.

Division of Student Affairs Strategic Plan

The Division of Student Affairs Executive Leadership Team developed a [vision](#) for where they see the organization in 2030 and launched a strategic planning effort in November 2023. The Divisional Strategic Planning Committee launched in February is charged with developing a strategic plan for the division that facilitates focused and intentional contribution to the ESG Dimensions of Student Success and accomplishment of the goals in PWS. Through this process, the committee has been focused on broad and varied engagement within and outside the division. Engagement opportunities are taking place throughout the early half of spring term and the gathered information will directly inform the plan. The plan, metrics, and implementation strategy will be complete by the end of October and will launch at the Division of Student Affairs All-Division Meeting in fall 2024.

TRENDING AND EMERGING ISSUES

Leveraging Generative AI

As described earlier, the success of PWS is dependent on OSU's ability to redesign student supports and administrative functions, allowing for skilled professionals to focus on core tasks and creative problem solving. From data informed decision making to fundamentally altering teaching and learning practice, the availability and access to AI is and will continue to alter the higher education landscape. It is critical that the entire OSU community continues to embrace and adapt to this rapidly evolving environment, being responsive to the new opportunities brought on by this push for innovative thinking.

Academic Readiness

The educational landscape has witnessed unprecedented disruptions, particularly in the K-12 sector. As students transition into higher education, it is imperative to acknowledge and address how previous learning loss affects the preparedness of incoming students. In response, OSU will continue to implement strategic interventions that bridge the educational gaps, including working with K-12 educators, increasing programs like Supplemental Instruction, and integrating innovative teaching methodologies, such as AI-assisted learning.

Educational Pathways

Flexible learning pathways are increasingly becoming a focal point for higher education systems worldwide. College students and adult learners alike are seeking educational experiences that break away from traditional, rigid structures and OSU is evaluating how to respond to changing expectations. Additionally, learners are expecting customization in their educational experiences. Technology plays a pivotal role, enabling personalized learning. Whether through online platforms, blended approaches, or competency-based programs, students want tailored content that aligns with their goals and interests. OSU is considering these expectations as new academic programs and curriculum are designed.

Online Student Success

Fostering a sense of belonging and connection to their institution is an emerging issue for online learners. The challenge is not necessarily about creating peer connections but ensuring that

online learners feel like they matter to the university. The things OSU is doing well to address this include streamlining onboarding processes to help students get a successful start; building opportunities for students to engage with each other and the university in new ways; assisting students with financial hardships; offering holistic 1:1 support through success coaching; centralizing student services to provide a one-stop-shop for those navigating the university from a distance; and proactively engaging with students in danger of dropping out.

Some areas for improvement include graduating students at a higher rate; developing an institutional aid strategy that supports online students; granting credit for prior learning; helping adults studying online gain credit for their existing skills, knowledge and work experience; and leveraging the OSU alumni community to encourage networking of online students who are shifting careers.

NEXT STEPS

The Academic Strategies Committee will discuss the Student Life and Success briefing at its May 16, 2024 meeting.