



Meeting of the Academic Strategies Committee

April 4, 2024

2:10 – 4:05 pm

Memorial Union Horizon Rm.

MINUTES

Committee members present: Ed Feser (*ex-officio*), Greg Macpherson, Julie Manning (*chair*), Kirk Schueler (*ex-officio*), Inara Scott, Irem Tumer (*ex-officio*)

Committee members absent: Stephanie Bulger (*vice chair*), Maria Chávez-Haroldson

Other trustees present: Patty Bedient, Kassy Bonanno, Julia Brim-Edwards (*via Zoom*), Karla Chambers, Susan Clark, Román Hernández, Grant Kitamura, Elise McClure, Jayathi Murthy

University staff present: Jackie Bangs, Jon Boeckenstedt, Kevin Dougherty, Alix Gitelman, Becca Gose, Mike Green, Jen Humphreys, Stacy Jeffries, Philip Mote, Rob Odom, Shalece Rains, Patti Snopkowski, Irem Tumer, Scott Vignos

1. Call to Order / Roll Call / Declaration of a Quorum

Committee Chair Julie Manning called the meeting to order. Board Secretary Jackie Bangs called the roll and verified a quorum.

2. Provost's report

a. Status Report: Academic programs in development or review; institutional accreditation; program accreditations

Provost and Executive Vice President Ed Feser provided comprehensive updates on a range of topics.

He gave an overview of the university's seven-year accreditation cycle under the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU), adding that an accreditation project team chaired by Vice Provost for Academic Affairs and Senior Vice Provost Alix Gitelman would build and execute a workplan for the final two years of the process.

Feser provided an update on the implementation of *Prosperity Widely Shared*, the university's strategic plan. He reported active engagement from all senior domain leaders and noted a series of yearly summits to maintain momentum toward the plan's goals for research, student success and economic development and industry relations (EDIR). He added that much of the work is currently focused on budgeting for fiscal year 2025 and beyond, ground-truthing cost estimates and engaging with the consulting firm Huron.

The provost emphasized the importance of new program growth for the success of the strategic plan and reported that Ecampus had conducted an extensive market analysis and developed an online program growth strategy and plan identifying 31 proposed new online programs from seven colleges that could see significant enrollment if developed.

He announced a two-year contract with Elsevier to provide immediate access to more than 130 scholarly journal titles, noting that negotiations with Elsevier began in late 2022.

Feser announced the 2024 University Distinguished Professor honorees: Dr. Todd Palmer, professor in the School of Nuclear Science and Engineering in the College of Engineering, and Dr. Malgorzata Peszyńska, professor in the Department of Mathematics in the College of Science.

He announced the AI@OSU initiative, which was launched in January 2024 and led by Vrushali Bokil, associate dean in the College of Science, and Sam Williams, executive director of Business Architecture in UIT. Feser said the initiative was engaging widely across the university as it prepares an action plan and roadmap for OSU in four AI domains: Education, Knowledge, Economy and Administration.

The provost announced that OSU began offering a comprehensive mental health and well-being benefit in November for employees and their dependents through Lyra Health, noting that OSU is one of only two universities on the West Coast that provide this level of mental health benefits.

He concluded his report with information on two executive appointments:

- Dr. Kris Elliot appointed interim vice provost for Extension and Engagement, pending a national search for a new vice provost in the spring
- Interviews for the dean of the College of Liberal Arts expected in May.

3. Consent agenda

a. Minutes of the January 18, 2024 Academic Strategies Committee Meeting

A motion to approve the consent agenda was made by Trustee Macpherson, seconded by Trustee Scott and approved by all committee members in attendance.

4. Discussion items

a. Academic Programs briefing

Vice Provost for Academic Affairs and Senior Vice Provost Alix Gitelman and Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School Philip Mote provided an overview of the university's academic programs.

They commented on the student success, institutional mission and effectiveness standards that were part of the upcoming university accreditation efforts, noting that the strategic plan clearly maps OSU's focus on improving student outcomes and closing equity gaps.

Gitelman gave an overview of the biennial academic unit assessment process, which involves reports based on data from student coursework that ties to learning outcomes for each graduate- and undergraduate-level program. She noted that other elements of the assessments include faculty productivity; financial efficiency and resource use; and diversity, equity and inclusion.

Gitelman gave an overview of revised U.S. Department of Education gainful employment regulations that will go into effect this July, including additional requirements for graduate programs that will require student acknowledgment prior to enrollment in a program categorized as "low financial value" (as determined by the Department of Education).

Gitelman and Mote also provided additional updates regarding the university's push to expand microcredential programs, grow Ecampus enrollments and support faculty use of open educational resources to reduce costs to students. They announced the implementation of Core Education, the university's new general education program scheduled to launch in June 2025.

Mote noted high retention rates in graduate programs – in the mid-90s in some cases – and asked how the university's graduate programs could respond to societal changes like the arrival of AI. He stressed

the importance of having a conversation with faculty about launching research-focused MS and Ph.D. students into the research phase faster and moving them through those programs more quickly.

b. Enrollment Management briefing

Vice Provost for Enrollment Management Jon Boeckenstedt gave a comprehensive update on enrollment management.

He provided information on the federal FAFSA Simplification Act, a sweeping redesign of the processes and systems used to award federal student aid, noting that the rollout has been plagued with challenges that have delayed students' ability to complete the form and caused a subsequent delay in data necessary for financial aid packaging being sent to institutions.

Boeckenstedt said the university has prioritized communication with prospective students and is making adjustments whenever possible but noted a great deal of continuing uncertainty. He reported that the university is moving forward with only slight modifications to last year's financial aid packaging regimen for new students and is considering alternate strategies for transfer students.

Trustee Manning asked what the university can, or is, doing now, given the timeline and persistent uncertainty. Boeckenstedt said OSU had already extended its deadline from May 1 to June 1 because it was evident financial aid packages would not be ready in time. He said OSU was engaging in regular communication with parents and prospective students to keep them informed but expressed concern about the drop in advance tuition deposits from resident freshmen, adding he was not sure if those numbers would rebound. He said the university was doing everything it could to shore up non-resident enrollment, which is a little less price-sensitive for the fall, adding he's also aware that could lead to the residence halls being over capacity in the fall. He noted that OSU has also been in contact with high school counselors and independent counselors to keep them informed and cited additional outreach to students who may have trouble filling out the FAFSA because their parents don't have a social security number, adding that OSU is holding spots for them.

Trustee Manning asked a follow-up question about the new strategic plan and how it might impact the messaging and marketing OSU does as part of Boeckenstedt's work. Boeckenstedt noted the provost's "One OSU" concept and said the university was dedicating staff to spread the news about OSU-Cascades with traditional recruitment and admission staff, adding that the Corvallis campus was near capacity. He mentioned the good news/bad news situation of being near capacity in housing at OSU-Cascades and said the growth strategy in the strategic plan would require additional residence facilities. He noted additional efforts to bring the customer relationship management tool that has been successful for traditional undergraduate administration to the graduate school and Ecampus.

Chair Schueler asked about the competitiveness of OSU's tuition rates within the broader market. Boeckenstedt said OSU's tuition was lower than the University of Oregon's and the University of Washington's, noting the latter was OSU's biggest competitor for non-resident students. He added OSU tuition was substantially lower than the sticker price of many of the California public universities but added that California's generous Cal Grant program made net cost much lower for many students. He noted that tuition at public universities in Oregon is high because of low levels of state funding.

Vice Chair Hernández noted that approximately 65% of OSU's budget came from student tuition and asked Boeckenstedt to clarify that the solution was not to admit more students, given facilities limitations, and that the university needed additional resources like state funding. Boeckenstedt confirmed Hernández's statements and said another option was to adjust the mix of resident- and non-resident students while acknowledging the university's mission to the people of the state of Oregon.

Trustee McClure asked about the interaction between Pell Grants and the Oregon Opportunity Grant. Boeckenstedt said the federal government determined students' eligibility for a Pell Grant using a different index this year as part of the FAFSA simplification, which means more students will qualify for Pell and more students will qualify for the maximum amount of Pell. He said the state uses the same index to determine how many students are eligible for the Oregon Opportunity Grant (OOG), so if a student's OSU financial aid package assumes an OOG and then the state says the money isn't available, that's problematic. Boeckenstedt clarified that Pell Grants did not reduce a student's potential OOG; rather, the state's estimate may not be as generous because they're using the federal formula, which has changed.

Trustee Macpherson asked about the use of standardized testing to predict academic success, noting that some selective institutions were shifting toward that practice. He asked about OSU's practice and how it might play into the strategic plan goal of increasing the university's six-year graduation rate. Boeckenstedt noted that most institutions that have gone back to the SAT are within 100 miles of the Atlantic Ocean, adding that the closest institution to OSU that requires the SAT is 2,500 miles away. He said the entire West Coast was either test-optional or test-blind, and he did not anticipate that changing at OSU, where about 10 – 15% of incoming first-year students submitted a test score as part of their application last year.

Trustee Scott asked how online enrollment would change the university's approach to enrollment management, given that it is intended to grow and become a larger share of OSU's student portfolio. Boeckenstedt said he did not expect significant changes, noting that the biggest intersection between Ecampus and enrollment management concerns financial aid for students, with Ecampus priced differently than the Corvallis and OSU-Cascades campuses. Boeckenstedt added he would be thrilled if the university could figure out a way to optimize financial aid for online students but noted it was a math problem beyond his capacity to solve.

Trustee Bedient asked Boeckenstedt to summarize the crux of the problem with the FAFSA. He said congress passed the FAFSA Simplification Act three years ago with the goal of making it easier to fill out the form, but that there were issues with the technology; issues with the integration with the IRS; concerns about privacy and social security numbers; and incorrect data being pulled in from the IRS. Boeckenstedt introduced Keith Raab, assistant vice provost and director of financial aid, who added that the process for calculating the amount of aid and types of aid a student is eligible for has not gone well. He noted that, of the six million FAFSAs received, about 20% had some kind of error that kept them from being processed and another 20% had errors that did not keep them from being processed, but they were done wrong. Boeckenstedt commended the efforts of OSU's financial aid staff and their dedication to making sure things go as well as they can in light of FAFSA issues.

Trustee Chambers asked about price modeling and optimization modeling. Boeckenstedt said OSU's modeling was done externally and contained about 1,200 data points; for example, one of the things the university can look at is its history with a particular high school. Chambers asked about Boeckenstedt's gut instincts for fall. He said that, following patterns and trends, big public universities are considered the safe, reliable brand in times of crisis and would continue to attract their share of the population. He predicted community colleges would see a boon and expressed concerns that small private tuition-driven institutions would have a tough year.

Trustee Bedient asked what Boeckenstedt thought the Pac-12 realignment might do to enrollment. He said the only model we have is when Missouri left the Big 12 to go to the SEC, after which enrollment from Missouri at Kansas and Kansas State went up for the next eight years, though he clarified that could be attributable to factors other than Missouri leaving the Big 12. He added that OSU was seeing

a very slight drop-off in male enrollment along with a drop in Oregon residents, noting that he attributed a lot of that to problems with the FAFSA.

Trustee Manning commented that OSU had defied downward enrollment trends in recent years and asked what Boeckenstedt thought the university was doing differently or better than its peers. Boeckenstedt said Ecampus was a big factor and also cited the diversity of the university's enrollment portfolio and its ability to offer a pathway to a degree for every Oregonian, which is something no other institution in the state can say. He noted OSU was the only public R1 in the nation with 27 consecutive years of fall over fall growth going back to 1996. He credited the efforts of people no longer at the university whose efforts positioned OSU so well for the future.

Trustee Manning acknowledged the presence in the audience of Higher Education Coordinating Commission Vice Chair and Linn Benton Community College President Emeritus Greg Hamann.. She thanked him for his continued service and leadership to the higher education community in Oregon.

5. Adjournment

With no further discussion or business before the committee, Committee Chair Manning adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,



Stacy Jeffries
Executive Assistant, Office of the Board of Trustees