**2017 Bend State of the University Address**

**Wednesday, May 3, Riverhouse Hotel**

**Thank you for such a wonderful welcome.**

**Thank you, Kathy, the OSU Alumni Association and the many colleagues who have made this event possible.**

**We have more than 225 members of Beaver Nation with us tonight.**

**Thanks to each of you for being here and for supporting Oregon State University, OSU-Cascades and the vital role that higher education plays in Oregon’s future.**

**Tonight, I will highlight examples of excellence and innovation throughout OSU and, most particularly, here in Central Oregon.**

**Since 1868, Oregon State has had one mission: to serve and enrich the lives of all people. That same mission applies to OSU-Cascades since its founding in 2001.**

**As OSU celebrates its 150th anniversary as Oregon’s statewide university beginning this August – you can count on this: Oregon State will continue to serve others and have a meaningful impact in Central Oregon, and throughout the state and the world.**

**Looking ahead, OSU will continue to provide access to an excellent education for all qualified Oregonians in Corvallis, in Bend, within a new $50 million global marine research and education center in Newport, and through top-ranked, online, degree programs. We will advance lives, careers and communities through the work of the university’s Extension Service.**

**Oregon State University will provide economic opportunity and deliver innovative research solutions.**

**Many people support and engage in this work, including: Oregon State faculty, staff, students and administrators; The university’s board of trustees; -- Alumni and donors; Industry and community partners; Governor Kate Brown and Oregon legislators; Higher education colleagues, including at Central Oregon Community College; and local K-12 school partners.**

**The strength of collaborative leadership is apparent in Central Oregon. For more than 30 years, the tireless efforts of community leaders to bring a four-year university to this region has been incredible. So is the current work of Amy Tykeson, Janie Teater and others engaged in Now 4 OSU-Cascades – who are working hard to help us secure state bonding to expand OSU-Cascades to serve students and Central Oregon. These efforts have been bolstered by the new Oregon State University Cascades Advocacy and Advisory Board, which is made up of regional community members.**

**Another remarkable leader is Becky Johnson.**

**(Lead applause.)**

**Serving as vice president of OSU-Cascades is not just Becky’s job. It is her passion. Becky is leading an extraordinary effort to provide transformative benefits for Oregon’s fastest-growing region. Thank you, Becky, for all you do.**

**2016 was a year of far-reaching achievements at OSU.**

**In June, we graduated our largest class ever: 6,406 students in Corvallis and 379 students in Bend.**

**In fall, OSU’s enrollment totaled 31,303 students, making us Oregon’s largest university for the third straight year. 1,122 of those students were enrolled here – again a record number.**

**Last September, a standing-room-only gathering of community members, OSU faculty and students joined me along with Gov. Kate Brown, state Rep. Knute Buehler, Amy Tykeson and Becky to dedicate the new four-year campus of OSU-Cascades and the opening of Tykeson Hall. When Becky was introduced, she was given a standing ovation.**

**In January, we opened the campus’ first residence hall. Student Housing Magazine honored this facility recently as the nation’s most innovative new student housing.**

**Just today, we launched a new university branding campaign and logo for the Cascades campus. But none of this work is simply about a legacy of buildings or a campus but rather the many current and future students who attend Oregon State in Corvallis and in Bend. Some of our best, brightest and most accomplished students are with us tonight.**

**Would all OSU-Cascades students please stand and be recognized? (Lead applause)**

**These are the leaders of tomorrow. They give us such great hope and promise for the future.**

**A number of high school seniors, who are considering becoming part of Beaver Nation, also are here tonight.**

**Would each of you please stand and be recognized?**

**(Lead applause)**

**Last year, grant-funded research at Oregon State totaled a record $336 million – a nine percent increase over 2015, which also was a record year.**

**OSU research activities resulted in 70 invention commercialization disclosures; launched 11 companies; and engaged hundreds of faculty across the world; involved thousands of graduate students and nearly 10 percent of our undergraduate students.**

**Here are three examples of how teaching and research at OSU-Cascades are changing Central Oregon.**

**Marc Rubin, a faculty member in computer science, is doing research to forecast the prospect of avalanches in mountainous regions. He is developing a wireless detection and communication device to deploy in the Cascade Range, or, elsewhere. Marc’s work appeared in the video you saw at the start of tonight’s program.**

**Shannon Lipscomb, an associate professor in human development and family sciences, co-authored a nationally recognized study that discovered fire prevention chemicals applied to furniture, electronics and other goods may have negative developmental consequences for young children.**

**Matt Orr, a professor in biology, and Ron Reuter, a professor in natural resources, are working with undergraduate students in a restoration project along the south fork of the Crooked River. They have constructed artificial beaver dams to measure how genuine beaver dams contribute to the health of the environment and water quality. The research may provide a low-cost approach to restore streams and improve nearby habitats.**

**These four OSU-Cascades professors are with us tonight. Would each of you please stand? (Applaud)**

**OSU continues to receive national and global acclaim.**

**For example, Oregon State’s robotics program is ranked number 4 in the U.S. This program has 11 of the nation’s leading robotics faculty and involves 100 graduate and undergraduate students, who are demonstrating the uses of robots and artificial intelligence.**

**Earlier this year, US News and World Report -- for the third year in a row -- judged OSU’s Ecampus online undergraduate programs among the nation’s best – this year with a No. 8 ranking.**

**Such numbers only tell part of the Oregon State story.**

**Remarkable philanthropic efforts led by the OSU Foundation invest in student scholarships, fellowships, endowed faculty positions and strategic university initiatives, such as growing the OSU-Cascades campus; building the $65 million Oregon Forest Science Complex in Corvallis; and supporting student success.**

**Two weeks ago, Oregon State announced an anonymous $25 million lead gift to create a $60 million arts education center in Corvallis. This complex will bring together music, theater, digital communications programs and the visual arts to form a center of creativity infused with science and technology. This is a watershed investment in the arts for our entire state.**

**In the last two years alone, donors have contributed more than $253 million to Oregon State.**

**Recently, an anonymous $5 million donation was made to support funding construction of a second academic building on the Cascades campus. This gift along with another $1 million contribution is part of a $10 million fund-raising effort to match $69.5 million in campus construction bonding requested from the state.**

**You may recall that Robin and Curt Baney, owners of the Oxford Suites Hotel here in Bend, donated $500,000 this past year to endow an OSU-Cascades faculty position in hospitality management.**

**And that Bend’s own Hydro Flask provided a $250,000 gift to help fund an OSU-Cascades faculty position to launch an outdoor products manufacturing program.**

**Soon you will see high-rise buildings constructed in Portland and across the US using advanced, cross-laminated wood products from trees grown in central, eastern and western Oregon forests. Cross-laminated wood products are the latest invention from OSU’s College of Forestry, now ranked No. 2 in the world.**

**Looking ahead, Oregon State is doubling down on our commitment to student success. It is not enough for students simply to attend college. They must succeed while in school and graduate in a timely manner.**

**We know that given the financial burdens that students face today, there is nothing worse than to leave college without a degree and for the only piece of paper they can show is the bank statement reflecting their student loan debt.**

**A year ago, I announced the launch of Oregon State’s Student Success Initiative. I committed that by 2020, OSU intends to:**

* **Raise first-year retention rates for all undergraduate students to 90 percent;**
* **Raise six-year graduation rates for all undergraduate students to 70 percent.**
* **Achieve higher completion rates for all groups of graduate and doctoral students.**
* **Ensure that every OSU student has at least one experiential learning opportunity such as an internship or study abroad experience.**

**I am very pleased to report tonight that the OSU Foundation has raised more than $50 million of a $150 million goal to support the student success initiative.**

**(Lead applause. Pause. Let applause last.)**

**This $150 million will support scholarships, student experiential learning and other programs to help all students reach their full potential. I am all in for the Student Success Initiative. As a first-generation college student myself, this is personal. I am committed to deliver.**

**Let’s meet an OSU-Cascades student, who demonstrates why focusing on student success matters.**

**Melanie Widmer of Madras received an associate’s degree from Central Oregon Community College in 1998. But she was unable to leave Central Oregon to earn her four-year degree, due to working in her family business – Madras Sanitary Service.**

**Thanks to OSU-Cascades, Melanie will graduate next spring with a degree in business. Melanie and her husband are with us tonight. The former mayor of Madras and now president of her family business, Melanie is an outstanding example of what is possible when we invest in student success.**

**Melanie will you please stand and be recognized. (Lead applause.)**

**Students such as Melanie -- and future students will determine our collective future. But, they need our engagement.**

**I ask each of you to join me to help advance the Student Success Initiative so that we may get it right for every student.**

**Oregon State is well-positioned for this effort, thanks to the commitment of our faculty, staff, deans, other colleagues, and leaders including:**

* **New Provost and Executive Vice President Ed Feser from the University of Illinois. Ed and his wife, Kathy are with us tonight;**
* **Larry Rodgers, the dean of the College of Liberal Arts, who is here tonight; and**
* **Dean Toni Doolen, who leads Oregon State University’s Honors College. Thanks to the efforts of Toni and Bend campus colleagues, OSU-Cascades will welcome its first cohort of honors college students this fall.**

**Our state’s future is at a crossroads and the path we take will have profound implications for this state’s future and the future of all Oregonians.**

**Nationally, state funding for higher education adjusted for inflation has dropped 18 percent since 2008.**

**Even with an unprecedented increase in funding provided by the 2015 Oregon Legislature, our state’s support for higher education has declined 21.7 percent since 2008 – 20 percent more than the national average rate of decline.**

**Oregon’s disinvestment in higher education is landing on the backs of students and their families as tuition now pays 70 percent of the cost of Oregon State’s instructional budget and the state only 30 percent … a complete reversal from 15 years ago.**

**Yet, in 2017 the Governor’s budget essentially flat-funds our universities at 2015-17 levels.**

**By contrast, Oregon’s seven public university presidents are seeking a $100 million increase in state operating funds for the 2017-19 biennium to maintain educational quality, student programming and to manage the cost of state-mandated employee benefits. If we are unsuccessful in receiving sufficient state support:**

* **The quality of what we do will be threatened;**
* **We will be forced to cut academic and student support programs; and**
* **Raise tuition beyond what students and families can afford. If this happens, fewer students will have the opportunities enjoyed by Melanie Widmer and other students here tonight.**

**We must persist for what is right and what is needed. And, we must work with the governor and Oregon legislators to prioritize college students and their future.**

**Oregon State also will lobby the Legislature to support fully OSU’s statewide public services – the Extension Service, experiment stations and forest research labs – that serve our state and Deschutes, Crook and Jefferson counties with boots-on-the-ground community-based services, economic development and research.**

**And, we will continue to advocate for the Legislature to fulfill its long-stated commitment to Central Oregon to invest in a four-year university.**

**On Friday, April 21, the Oregon State University Board of Trustees adopted a resident undergraduate tuition increase of 4% with 1% reserved for need based financial aid. The Board shares my belief that our graduates are our greatest contribution to the future. We cannot realize our aspirations for this great university on the backs of our students and their families. We are prepared to address a possible $20 million funding gap for next year to make it clear that raising tuition on Oregon undergraduate students is a last and not a first resort.**

**At the same time, we remain undaunted in seeking $69.5 million in state bonding for expansion of the OSU-Cascades campus. Our Governor has proposed only $20 million in bonding for OSU Cascades this session.**

**Yet, thanks to the sponsorship of state Sen. Tim Knopp and Rep. Knute Buehler and the support of other legislative colleagues from Central Oregon, the House Higher Education Committee in March approved legislation to fund the campus expansion. The Ways and Means Committee is now considering by the bill.**

**Without approval of the $69.5 million, we will be in the position of turning students away within three years. Not meeting the demand for higher education in the fastest growing region in the state is not good public policy and makes no business sense.**

**According to an analysis by the economic-consulting firm, ECONorthwest, if work on the Bend campus occurs as planned, by 2034 -- with the predicted full build-out of the 5,000-student campus -- OSU-Cascades’ continuing operations – will contribute $121.9 million in total annual economic output in Deschutes County and 1,925 jobs.**

**Central Oregon residents have waited long enough for a four-year university and I sense most Oregonians agree.**

**As we look to our future, none of us should ever be satisfied with what we have achieved to date.**

**As OSU’s President, I have pledged that “good” will never be good enough and that we will be excellent in everything we do.**

**Please join me to ensure OSU-Cascades’ future, the future of our students and of our state is one of equal opportunity. Together, we can make our communities and state thrive.**

**Let me assure you that while OSU has served our state well for nearly 150 years, we are not done.**

**I guarantee you that the best is yet to come.**

**Thank you.**