

Memorandum

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To: University Governance Work Group,  
Oregon State Board of Higher Education

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Subject: Updated Report on Transition Options for Governance of the Technical  
and Regional Universities in the Oregon University System –Addendum

**Addendum**

**Considerations for the Possible Creation of a  
Multi-campus University**

**Introduction**

The following is a framework for a multi-campus university, one of several options the University Governance Work Group is considering for the governance, oversight and administration of Eastern Oregon University, Oregon Institute of Technology, Southern Oregon University, and Western Oregon University. AGB was asked to more fully develop this option to assist the Work Group in its deliberations.

A multi-campus university can also be called a single consolidated institution or an integrated university. These three titles are used interchangeably throughout this report. For the purposes of this report, we have named the multi-campus university, the “Technical and Regional University of Oregon,” (TRUO), acknowledging that there may be a better name for it.

The AGB consultants have familiarity with several integrated universities, including Rutgers University, the University of Michigan, the University of Minnesota, Pennsylvania State University, and Ohio State University, which helped inform this report. Each of these could be called an “integrated research university” or “integrated flagship university.” Although similar in many respects, each of the above universities is organized and operated differently, with different reporting structures and varying

degrees of integration, alignment, consolidation, and autonomy. What may be created in a possibly new Technical and Regional University of Oregon would be unique and inevitably break new ground. This is primarily because the four universities that would be consolidated into the new TRUO would not be anchored by a large public research university or “flagship” institution, as is the case in New Jersey, Michigan, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, and Ohio.

Operating assumptions:

- One governing board of trustees for one university with four campuses, with membership and responsibilities on par and parallel with the boards to be established at the University of Oregon, Portland State University, and Oregon State University.
- The university shall be subject to the authority of the Higher Education Coordinating Commission regarding academic programs, tuition levels, state financing plan, and other responsibilities of the commission.
- The university will participate in the Shared Services Enterprise for the several administrative functions that it offers.
- One university president who is the chief executive of the university and answers directly to the board of trustees.
- Four campus executives (title to be determined, such as executive directors, directors, or chancellors) who report directly to the president of the university.
- The university will have a single mission and a single strategic plan. The mission may be an amalgam of the different missions of the current institutions. Within the single mission, distinct programs may remain with a single campus and be extended to other campuses if student demand necessitates.
- The Office of the President, consisting of a provost/vice president for academic and student programs (including research and sponsored programs), vice president for budget and Finance (including controller, IT, human resources and facilities management), vice president for external relations (including communications, government relations, and community or workforce partnerships), and a general counsel. The staffing level needed in the Office of President of the university will depend on the nature and extent of functions that will be performed for them by the Shared Services Enterprise.
- One regional accreditation for the university.
- Academic programs—undergraduate, graduate, and distance education—organized under a single provost.
- One dean for each college of the university with responsibility for oversight on all campuses.
- Academic departments that span across all four campuses with one chair for each department.
- Single specialized (program) accreditation for programs across campuses.
- One faculty senate for the university across all campuses.

- Transition to common IT platforms for academic, distance learning, and accounting purposes, consistent if appropriate with the templates and functions of the Shared Services Enterprise.
- For the foreseeable future, fundraising and the work of separate campus foundations and alumni relations remain separate and affiliated with each campus, but are coordinated by the Office of the President.
- Separate athletic teams and programs remain at each campus (depending on NCAA, NAIA and conference rules and regulations).
- Collective bargaining with all bargaining units is conducted by the Office of the President, unless bargaining is the purview of the Governor.

### **Potential benefits of a single consolidated institution**

1. The primary beneficiaries of the new TRUO should be its students, who have available to them the full resources and talents of the TRUO, including applying to multiple campuses under a simpler application process, pursuing a common curriculum with shared course numbering, moving more seamlessly among campuses, and feeling a strong connection to a large, vital university. Overall, access could be increased.
2. TRUO could experience increased clout in the state and may prove more attractive to potential administrators and faculty members.
3. Faculty could have more opportunities to connect with colleagues on other TRUO campuses for teaching and scholarship.
4. Any campus within TRUO may become the lead campus in any academic area in which it has special expertise and capacity or in an administrative area not covered by the Shared Services Enterprise.
5. Through its raised profile, TRUO could become a greater magnet for philanthropy, even as its individual campuses retain separate (but coordinated) fundraising capacities and affiliated foundations.
6. The four campuses of TRUO will retain pride in their history and traditions while taking additional pride as component parts of a new unique university that undoubtedly would attract national attention. Their capacity to serve their regions and the state effectively could be enhanced as academic units work collaboratively across campuses.
7. Under the new integrated university, each separate campus can benefit from:
  - a. New academic programs, including graduate programs, which will enable campuses to meet regional education needs better by bringing together the resources of all TRUO campuses.

- b. The opportunity to contribute to a vision and strategic plan that advance TRUO in a unified way.
  - c. More academic programs and efficient delivery of educational programs as resources are deployed more strategically.
  - d. Innovative, entrepreneurial, inter-disciplinary activities at and among the campuses.
- 8. A single, regional accreditation can save valuable time, effort, and money.
  - 9. A flatter, more consistent, and readily comprehended leadership structure not only could save money, it could also provide for greater direction, control, accountability, and collaboration.

**Important issues under a single consolidated institution model: further elaboration if the new integrated university is created**

*Strategic Planning*

As soon as the structural changes have been agreed upon, a clear mission for the TRUO established, a timetable for implementation has been agreed upon, and the board of trustees has appointed the president, a strategic planning process for the new university would need to be commenced as soon as possible. The strategic plan should involve the leaders, and staff and faculty representatives of all TRUO campuses. The planning process for the first strategic plan under the new structure will be complex and will provide a needed strategy for TRUO as a whole. Although board members often play a limited role in the strategic planning process for their universities, this significant planning process should benefit from a measure of board participation.

*Accreditation*

A goal for TRUO must be a single, regional accreditation with the Northwest Commission of Colleges and Universities. The Commission's rules and process for transitioning from separate accreditation for each of the four component universities to a single accreditation for TRUO as one integrated, multi-campus university will have to be investigated. Such a practice is followed for Pennsylvania System University and its 22 campuses, and for Rutgers University and its three institutions. The process begins by notifying the Commission of this intent and then following their processes for bringing the

university to fruition. Single, programmatic accreditation across the campuses and units of the university may be the best course of action, depending on the extent of program integration at the upper division and graduate levels.

### ***Academic Coordination***

TRUO could benefit from instituting a single curriculum with a common course numbering system for all of its campuses. A single general education curriculum also is a logical and necessary component of a successful, integrated institution. This facilitates a synergistic, unified approach to academic policy, enables and encourages collaboration among campus faculty, and facilitates student mobility (assuming students transferring to campuses with higher admission standards demonstrate that they meet those standards). Academic offerings through distance education will need to be consolidated and re-branded. Although academic programs, including graduate programs, can be offered to larger numbers of students at the various campuses, programs should not be replicated on all campuses—lead campuses would still house distinctive programs.

Frequent communication among academic units will be essential, being that there will be only one dean per college and one department chair for each academic department across the entire four campus university, each housed at any of the four campuses. It might be wise to have assistant deans and vice chairs at the other campuses to facilitate communication and decision-making.

Considerable coordination and an appropriate transition period would be required to create and draw the above elements together.

### ***Admissions***

There should be a single application form for all campuses, with students asked to indicate their desired preference(s). Each campus retains its separate admissions requirements and competitive academic programs their own admissions standards. Students need not re-apply when transferring between campuses if they meet all academic requirements.

### ***Faculty Collaboration in Teaching, Research and Service***

A single consolidated university should enable more joint teaching opportunities among the campuses, including inter- and cross-disciplinary courses and programs, particularly as encouraged by the academic leadership of

TRUO. Some of these joint opportunities occur live and in person, others through distance education and education technology.

Distance education opportunities that use lead faculty from top departments and top programs from any and all of the TRUO campuses could be expanded. This can prove to be an efficient way to develop academic programs in the new university, ensure quality educational experiences for students, and contain costs.

All of this must occur under the direction of the provost/vice president for academic affairs, as coordinated with campus chief academic officers. The provost and board of trustees could make collaboration a priority by creating incentive grants for joint teaching (including online courses), and for faculty research.

### ***Tenure and Promotion Policies***

In time, TRUO would need to move toward a unified system of promotion and tenure. Within such a system, tenure and promotions guidelines are university-wide and criteria for individual academic departments and individual academic units become university-wide.

The development of new guidelines will require cross-campus teams to work together under the direction of the provost. University guidelines are uniform at all campuses. Tenure and promotion policies will have to include guidelines and criteria for collaboration in teaching and research.

During the transition period, it would be essential that representatives of the TRUO member campuses, including the faculty, be part of the process of forming one TRUO in order to overcome concerns.

### ***Federal Relations, Monies and Reporting; Student Financial Aid***

Just as a new university would necessitate a new relationship with the State of Oregon, a new relationship with the federal government would also ensue. Decisions would have to be made about the awarding of federal student assistance and federal sponsored research, institutional grants and demonstration projects. Likewise, required federal reporting and compliance will have to change from the four institutions to the new university. During a transition or interim period, it might be best for student aid to continue to be distributed at the campus level (for federal as well as state and institutional aid), yet a common process for aid distribution should be developed by the president's office as soon as possible. Federal grants and project applications

and awards should be funneled through the president's office (with the assistance of the appropriate dean) to ensure that applications are submitted in a coordinated manner.

### *University Policies*

In addition to the policies discussed above, new university-wide policies will have to be developed, everything from a set of bylaws for the new board of trustees, to employee compensation and benefits, ethics and conflict of interest, data collection and dissemination, communications and emergency preparedness, and purchasing. Just as the governing board will decide what authority and decisions it reserves for itself and which it delegates to the president, a determination will have to be made regarding what decisions the president's office reserves for itself and which it delegates to the four campuses and the campus executives. The greater the amount of existing policies that can be retained at the campus level the better.

### *New and Common Web Presence*

A "primary" website will have to be created for the new integrated university. Existing campus websites will need to be re-designed. The design should be consistent so that when visitors are navigating the site and link to any one of the four campuses, it will be clear that they are reading information about a single university. Likewise, new printed materials about the university will need to be developed.

### **Initial tasks to be undertaken if a single consolidated institution is to be created**

1. Determine whether a multi-campus university is best for the future of the four universities.
2. Craft legislation to create the university, clarify and establish its mission, and charter the board of trustees to replace the current OSBHE.
3. Obtain a formal statement from Northwest Association of Colleges and Universities and any other accrediting groups on the implications of the realignment on institutional and program level accreditation, and the steps that must be taken for continued accreditation.
4. Determine where the Office of the President and other university administration offices will be located.

5. To begin the communication process, conduct meetings of executive officers that draw together the leadership of the new university.
6. Initiate meetings of comparable administrators from the separate units with peers – CFOs, academic vice presidents, etc., and begin the communication process.
  - a. Begin thinking toward ways in which the academic programs of the various units can be coordinated more closely; begin the process of creating a common curriculum (at least for general education) and a common course numbering system.
  - b. Begin implementation of recommendations from the executive, administrators' and realignment groups with respect to government relations, fundraising, and alumni relations, etc.
  - c. With the intent of creating a uniform set of principles and guidelines, form a university-wide team with representatives from each campus to review tenure and promotion policies.
  - d. Engage the services of an experienced public relations-communications firm to assist with the coordination and brand of the new integrated university.
  - e. Launch a strategic planning process for the new TRUO.

### **Conclusion: Caveats and obstacles that would need to be overcome**

For the Technical and Regional University of Oregon or similarly named institution to be created its advocates will have to overcome several obstacles and respond to several questions. We have attempted to identify those that might be most salient.

- The consolidation of four institutions will be met with considerable resistance, involve disruption, create fears of staff reductions, and be very time consuming for all involved: employees, state officials, and board members. In reality, the consolidation is a merger of four institutions into one. Campuses with long histories of independent accreditation, alumni organizations, fund-raising, campus traditions, and regional leadership by campus officers can be seriously disrupted by change of this magnitude. The university system with the most recent experience with mergers is the University System of Georgia. Three mergers have been undertaken—all with institutions in relative geographical proximity. Although Regents University is anchored by the Medical College of Georgia, its creation may offer many valuable lessons on how a merger can be accomplished with minimal disruption.

- It is conceivable that private foundations and donors would devote resources to a new university, given the synergies that could result from its creation. But will total gifts and private grants approach the combined levels currently raised by the four universities? There will likely be instances of resistance to the consolidation by the institutions' alumni. Will alumni philanthropy and loyalty carryover to the new multi-campus university?
- The four institutions would have to be renamed. Ideally, all campuses would have similar names perhaps as determined by the Oregon State Board of Higher Education with the advice of the campuses and communications/branding experts. Anticipate that the loss of institutional brand and identity may be resisted by alumni, students, employees, local business interests, locally elected officials, and others.
- Where should the Office of the President be located? Should it be in Salem? It should not be on any of the four campuses, unless one of the current institutions is to be designated as the lead campus and one person is to serve as university president and that campus's executive.
- Current presidents of the four university campuses will experience diminished authority under a single consolidated university in regard to the oversight of their own campus, particularly in regard to academics, as a provost position in the president's office and university-wide colleges and departments with common deans and department chairs are created. While not insurmountable, confusion will arise about who reports to whom, and from what academic and administrative areas.
- The geographic distance between the campuses will present another set of challenges. Combined with the diminished autonomy of campuses, activities such as budget decisions, purchasing, and personnel evaluations will become more complex. Meetings and communication among deans, chairs and faculty, and deans and faculty, while facilitated electronically, will be difficult.
- Advocates will need to be clear and consistent on the reasons and rationale for the single integrated university. Is it to save money and keep costs (tuition and fees) affordable for state residents? Is it to improve quality? Is it to make a greater number of educational opportunities available to greater numbers of students and to enable the state to meet Oregon's 40-40-20 goal? How the consolidation will achieve any of these will be essential to respond to critics. Arguments will be needed as to how the multi-campus university will contribute to the betterment of the lives of Oregonians and to the economic future and social fabric of the State.

- Finally, how would the creation of the Technical and Regional University of Oregon, a multi-campus *university*, be different from a multi-campus *system*? How the new university is different from (or preferable to) a smaller, scaled down version of OUS with four institutions rather than seven is a legitimate question. There are clear differences: a system has separate institutions with separate accreditation, separate administrative structures, and distinct academic programs. In a system, each university is overseen by a president and, although part of a system, a greater amount of institutional autonomy, flexibility and discretion is present. In a system, each institution retains its distinct institutional mission and its own strategic plan (albeit, aligned with the broader system plan). As is outlined in this report, a multi-campus university is significantly different; it is a single institution, geographically dispersed.