

Approved: 12/1/98

**Special Assembly  
November 17, 1998**

The Assembly was opened by Chair Dan Mielke at 3:15 p.m..

**I. President's Update**

Dr. Creighton addressed the following item:

1. Enrollment Management Crisis

I have asked the university community to meet today to discuss and update the enrollment information that I shared with you at the last meeting of the University Assembly. We have a serious problem, and I need the help of everyone on this campus if we are to avoid a serious financial situation.

To explain where we are currently, I really need to describe the University in terms of our past, our present and, hopefully, our future. I do not intend any of these comments I am going to make today to be criticism of past decisions nor do I attempt to be pejorative of any of the comments I've made so please keep that in mind. Enrollment strategy, in the past, had been determined by the requirements of the BAS Budget Model. In this model, a targeted, on-campus enrollment for each biennium was established with each OUS institution. This target enrollment was described as the midpoint, it was projected using historical retention information for each of the campuses over the three quarters of the academic year, and state appropriations were determined upon this estimate. On either side of this midpoint was an enrollment cushion called the corridor. Enrollment could increase or decrease by a hundred students on either side of the corridor without any budgetary implications toward the institution. However, if enrollments fell out of the corridor, institutions were required to return a proportional amount of allocated dollars back to the state. Also, importantly, in the BAS model, students enrolled through DEP were not counted and state appropriations were not received for students enrolled in these programs.

Because the greatest amount of state support per student could be obtained if an institution's enrollment was near the bottom, but not outside, the corridor, a strategy was pursued at Eastern to keep the enrollment near the bottom of the corridor. As this overhead demonstrates, the success of this strategy varied over the years.

What we are looking at on the vertical axis is the three term average of enrollment over a period of biennium starting in 1993 and finishing up our current biennium. For each of these periods, a mid point was achieved and a corridor was assigned for that enrollment

period. Our actual enrollment as you will see fell beneath the corridor in the 1993 and 1994 Biennium and at the very bottom of the corridors in the 1995, 1996 and 1997 budgetary period. The consequences we face, however, today are because we have significantly fallen beneath our budgetary corridor and our estimated enrollment for this academic year is 1478 students.

So much for the past, and now for the present. Although overall enrollment is up for the University because of our contributions of DEP, for whatever reason, we have experienced a significant, on-campus enrollment shortfall for Fall Quarter, and our state-supported enrollment is nearly 10% below where it was last year at this time. As a result, our projected three quarter enrollment falls significantly outside of the corridor. When I talked to you earlier in the month, we were about 200 students below the floor of the corridor. We have worked hard to count every student that we can, including those EOU students at the University Center in Bend and by moving graduate students from DEP to the state support side. We have played every imaginable—and some unimaginable—cards that we could. Nevertheless, using our historical retention rates, we are still projected to fall short by about 40 students. Although this doesn't sound like a lot of students—and it isn't—we are required to return a portion of our allocation, not back to the bottom of the corridor, but back to the projected mid-point. By our current, best estimate this amount is now \$420,000 (140 students). We do not have the financial reserves to cover anywhere near that amount. If we can not work ourselves out of this situation, we will need to consider every option, unfortunately even that of faculty and staff layoffs.

Importantly, we do still have some opportunity to change that dismal prospect. First, remember that the three quarter endpoint is projected using our historical retention rate. I know that you have heard me mention this before, but we need to dramatically improve our retention rates. Unfortunately, I do not mean improvement in five years—I mean right now. This must become an immediate campus priority. I need each of you to individually and collectively examine what you may do to help retain the students that we have. We need to share the good ideas and to shoulder responsibility.

For example, there is one immediate thing that was suggested that might help with some of our current students. There are a number of students that have not preregistered for Winter Term. We have a list of these students, grouped by faculty members and their respective advisees, that I am requesting each advisor to call their students. What I would like you to do is to remind your advisee to preregister, and if they do not intend to register, please find out why. We will distribute this list at the end of the Assembly today.

Our second option, although limited, is to try to recruit additional transfer students this year. I have asked our admissions people to double their efforts to bring in additional students. As faculty and staff, you play an important role in recruiting students, and you may be asked to help by calling some of these prospects.

We are in this situation together. The problems are solvable, but we must work together to retain and to recruit our students. There is not time for finger pointing or assigning blame. We do have the opportunity for positive change.

And that brings us to the future. We are making a transition to a new budget model that only emphasizes the importance of enrollment and retention. In this new model, tuition dollars will flow directly to campus, and all students—both traditional or served through DEP—will be counted. Our budget will be even more tightly tied to our enrollment. Our opportunities for the future are based on this model, whether we are considering faculty raises or new positions. We are opening up the budget process so you will have the opportunity for input and for developing priorities. However, when we develop budgets for programs or Schools in the future, the same basic premise will be applied. The number of students enrolled at the end of the year will determine future allocations, and not the enrollment at the beginning of the year. The benefits of successful enrollment and retention strategies will be rewarded and the consequences of poor retention in individual programs or majors will be borne by those programs.

I sincerely appreciate the value of small classes, and I want to keep our student/faculty ratio at 17:1, but there is a real need for us to increase our enrollment and retention. Again, we will need to be individually and collectively involved. We will all need to write and call prospective students, to serve as mentors and advisors, to design a curriculum that our students can complete in a timely manner, to schedule classes at times convenient for all of our students, and to help our students meet the high standards we have set for them.

I have described to you my goals for Eastern Oregon University. I think Eastern can continue to succeed, grow, and eventually prosper by reinforcing its reputation as a high quality, cost efficient, effective and student-centered university. With the emphasis on high quality, my vision is for EOU to lead the Oregon University System in retention rates and graduation rates. I would like to have Eastern Oregon University nationally ranked as one of the best public institutions in the United States. We need to make the transition from a teaching-centered institution to a learning-centered institution.

To achieve these goals, we must all form a partnership for success. We must truly be a student-centered campus, where all of us treat students and each other with the same degree of respect that we as individuals want to be treated. We need to remember and to embrace those qualities that we value as a small university. It is those daily interactions that define who we are. Here, all students should have the advantage of personal and professional advising from faculty. Students should have the opportunity to work closely with faculty in the classroom and on projects, and students should consider our faculty as mentors and someone on their side.

While I don't want to underscore the seriousness of our current enrollment problem, there are already many good things going on here. We need to build on these good things for the future, and I look forward to working with you to take Eastern Oregon University to

the next level of excellence. Thank you! I'm sure there are some questions and suggestions, and I welcome your input.

The floor was open to questions which follow:

17. Could you talk about how the student rate is based on 15 credits and how students under 15 credits are not counted as a whole student.
1. The equivalent FTE is based on 15 credits. Below 15 credits we do not get credit for, those above 15 we also get credit for those accumulating credits.
17. ....?????
1. That is a significant question because I think it does affect our graduation rates because students do use those additional hours to catch up. I am not in favor of penalizing students for taking over 15 hours.
17. What are the options available to pay back the \$420,000?
1. This question is to the heart of the issue. We currently have about \$100,000 in reserve. The decision was made to pay for some of our positions currently funded out of our reserves. That has eaten up an amount of reserves, we don't have the money to pay back \$420,000.

We are in a particularly difficult situation since contracts have already been allocated for most of the year. I am not really certain what options we really do have to meet this demand. The state, historically, has taken this money back. Whether they allow us to roll it over until next year, for example, like OIT did, I am not sure. But, if we start borrowing from our future we are only jeopardizing our success.

17. Please explain to us what does and does not count through DEP.
1. DEP, in the new budget model, all students will be counted as students coming to this campus. All tuition dollars generated through DEP and from traditional campus will be counted in on our campus. This is a dramatic change from where it was before. So a student will be treated as a student.
17. Couldn't we borrow from DEP and pay it back next year since we can count all that student enrollment and tuition dollars?
1. Again, I think we are robbing Peter to pay Paul if we do that. DEP has exhibited about a 28% growth this year and it has become profitable for the last couple of years. What I had in mind is to blend all of our programs whether it is DEP or traditional on-campus program into one. There will not be a discrimination between those dollars and these dollars. They will be ALL the campus dollars.
17. Would that indicate a very large increase on campus dollars?
1. If it was exactly translated one for one, yes. But it is not exactly one for one in the future. The overall enrollment in the new model will not be the same calculation

as in the previous BAS model.

Comment: Dr. Shepard made a comment regarding DEP and that it is booming.

It is important to point out that in the future, the competition of the DEP is going to be expensive and we are going to face an enormous competitive market out there. It is going to be important for us not to depend upon them to carry the University over a long period of time.

17. What is the time constraint for repayment of the \$420,000.
  1. The \$420,000 we do owe can be negotiated at the end of the year. We do have some time, we have two and a half quarters to reverse the current trend.
17. You said we would increase the rate of the corridor, can we retain the bottom of the corridor, do we still have a problem or are we out?
  1. If we are back in the corridor and we get those students back and change that slope, suddenly everything rotates. If we are still in the same slope of retentions we will be fine. We are talking about 40 extra students. Not only do we have to keep every student we have now, but we have to add 40 to it.
17. How many students do we have between the 12-15 hours?
  1. I don't really know. Where does it make that much of a difference if we lump all of them together for an FTE generated which is basically what the allocation is based upon, not head count but FTE students.

Comment: Dr. Shepard commended on the student plateau of credits (14 credits below the current).

17. If we get back into the bottom of the corridor, then we are ok? Wouldn't it be cheaper to go out and buy 50 students?
  1. The question is a good one. Can't we go out and buy 40 students, and isn't it cheaper to provide \$3,000 worth of tuition than to give that money back. That is one prospect in private schools, they do that time in and time out by discounting tuition.
17. One of the things that we have been talking about in English and writing has to do with enrollment, to resurrect a version of Jim Hottois' idea of a 2/3 program. Whereas, we could bring gifted students from High Schools here to take lower division courses because they are more challenging. Is double enrollment a legal problem, or do you know?
  1. That is a perfectly good strategy. We have not done a very good job in reaching out to high school students to bring them in for that senior year. In fact, most of them are coasting their senior year since they have taken all the required courses that were necessary to get into college in the first place. So, they are looking for something.

Comment: Dr. Shepard mentioned that there has been an early enrollment program established which is advertized to the high schools.

17. Do we count OSU and OHSU students:
  1. The agreements specify that as they take EOU classes and generate EOU credits, we get the credit for it. If they take OSU or OHSU credits then those institutions get the credits.
  
17. What is the overall influence for summer school?
  1. Right now we do not include the summer students in the projections. In the new model we will.
  
17. Do we have a central location for suggestions, do we have somewhere to communicate our concerns?
  1. We have formed the Enrollment Management Committee. Terral Schut is the chair of that committee. I would assume those comments should go to her and to the committee.
  
17. Do we have any type of working hypothesis to explain the 10% decline in the students?
  1. Formally, no, informally we have several. One is to have a geographically defined mission. The areas that we potentially service has had a very considerable decline in school age children. There are two bright spots at both ends of the Eastern region and north and south. But, in between is pretty luke-warm in terms of student enrollment. Two, I think we are being out maneuvered, out smarted and out hustled. Every other institution has turned up remarkably their recruiting, scholarship offers and everything else. We have not really responded. I think this year we have been significantly hurt by OSU, we have been significantly hurt by Washington and Idaho. I think we have not done a good job of reaching out to other areas. One of the things I do suggest, for example, is to make our policy on in-state tuition being charged to out-of-state students more widely known. That is an effective way of bringing more students. We don't have a defense on why students are not coming here. We have done a brief survey of students to get some indication but there is nothing formal.
  
17. Why aren't we taking more of our students with us to help recruit?
  1. I think it is a very effective technique to the students with admissions persons. I think it is a very effective technique to have students talking to other students. Students are a more effective spokesperson for the institution so I am all for that. There are some consequences about taking students out of classes for recruiting, but I think we do need to send students to schools and have them talk about the opportunity provided by a campus such as ours.
  
17. What will be the process once these suggestions are channeled forward?
  1. What I am looking for out of the Enrollment Management Committee are to

devise strategies to maximize our enrollment on campus. So this is the effective committee developing our enrollment strategy. I think that is where it is most relevant to send those suggestions.

Comment: Jerry Blanche mentioned the following:

In terms of marketing and recruiting it is very important for us to know during this pre registration process if students are not going to pre-register why they aren't. I would offer that we come up with a standardized questionnaire that a person could have handy on their desk in order to obtain that information.

1. We do not have any information being collected on our campus that helps with institutional research. It is a real weakness for us. Any information we can get from a student as to why they are not attending, why they are going somewhere else, is very relevant for us.

Comment: It was mentioned that there is formal recruiting and informal recruiting. Every time a student or faculty person is out visiting we are sure appreciative of ones telling about Eastern. It certainly is helpful. Dr. Creighton indicated that this is the type of partnership that is needed.

Comment: Dr. Shepard pointed out that recruiting and retention are two separate activities but are unequivocally linked. That is, we cannot treat our students disrespectfully and provide them with class long education, this is a more effective recruiting tool—the word really gets around. If we treat our students disrespectfully, and that does happen from time to time, that also gets around. So, we have got to pay attention to both. For the first time we have seen our retention rates go down and we really don't know why. We need to establish a relationship not just a program.

17. What about the current advising policy where only freshmen have to see their advisor?
  1. I would like to explore options of changing that. I believe both personally and professionally that all students require and benefit from personal, professional advising. I know that there are mechanisms in the current guidelines that provide for that, but I think that some of the people are interpreting that as advising is now optional. It is not optional, it is required, our students need it. I think one of the things that keeps coming up is that students feel that their advisor is losing interest in them and have lost contact with them after their first year.
17. What is the effect of the increased standards of admission on acceptances and maintenance?
  1. We don't have that information at this institution, but, nationally what is shown is that if you raise admission standards, retention will increase. There is a better correlation of the better quality students. I have no explanation as to why our retention rate is so poor this year. We brought in a good freshmen class.

17. Is there one term in which there is a more dramatic drop?
  1. Spring term. We have a situation we can do something about. We do have a retention rate problem and if we solve that, we can solve our corridor problem.
  
17. Could we come up with additional classes—Inter-session opportunities?
  1. Institutions that use that avenue are successful. Students use that as an avenue of catching up with their credits. Any option we ought to consider and explore.

Dr. Creighton thanked the Assembly for their attention.

Dan Mielke asked all on the Enrollment Management Committee to stand so everyone will know who to respond to.

## **II. Winter Pre-registration**

Pat North gave an overview of the process to initiate right now to help with the Enrollment problem. That is, contact the students who have not yet pre-registered for Winter term. There are lists available for almost every faculty member who have advisees of the students who have not yet pre-registered. The list includes the telephone number and space for notes (to indicate when called, left message, etc.) and will be passed out at the end of Assembly. There are a few students without telephone numbers, write to them. One common problem is that they forget to change advisor, if that is the case please write it in the notes section. The Admissions's Office will pick up the lists next Tuesday from your unit secretaries.

## **III. Five Minute Access**

### *A. Student Government*

Colby Marshall, ASEOU President, mentioned that the energy in the room is exactly what is needed to solve the current problem. He stressed the importance of good advising. Any suggestions/comments need to come to the Enrollment Management Committee in order to make a plan to get enrollment up—we must not get distracted. Advising goes back to retention and recruitment. Those students that you advise and show you are really interested in them and their program and what they are trying to achieve, their goals, etc., they are going to go back to their parents, friends, family and emphasize that Eastern is a place they can come to and get the high quality, overall education. We don't need to have the biggest rock climbing wall, the fact is we have some of the best people in Oregon teaching our students and we really ought to be emphasizing that. Support our students, take on the role of an advisor and friend. What this will do is help make our campus community closer and keep our students here. If we do that we will be better than we already are.

### *B. Phone Campaign*

Kasey Powers, Admissions Office, announced that Phone Campaign will be held

the week of January 10-14. There will be 2000 students that need to be contacted. In the past, the Ambassadors and about 20 faculty members have participated. This year our goal is to have 60 faculty participate. It is only two hours of your time. If you are interested in participating, contact Kasey.

Meeting adjourned.