

## Comments on Eastern Oregon University conditions report

Faced with significant financial challenges, shrinking state support and decreases in enrollment, Eastern Oregon University has shown remarkable resilience and willingness to, once again, do the hard and often painful work of financial readjustment and charting a course through stormy waters. The attached report is a forthright presentation of the University's circumstance, the road that led to the present circumstance, and the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. Recognizing that there is new governance leadership at Eastern, the report should serve as a strong orientation and framework for decision-making by the new board and president.

The State Board of Higher Education offers its appreciation to Eastern Oregon University for both its recent actions to lay the foundation for a sustainable future and for its discussion of lessons learned from the past and possibilities for the future laid out in the report.

We offer the following summary comments.

***With total credit hours by the end of the decade projected to remain well below those at the beginning of the decade, will Eastern have the capacity and internal support to make whatever changes are needed to (in Eastern's words): "EOU must remain a key player in serving the core higher education needs of the region and must forge a new role as both conduit and catalyst to assist rural communities in adapting to new demographic realities, meet unmet regional needs by aligning programming accordingly, and establish niche programs by responding to opportunities that facilitate new enrollment pipelines to EOU and the resultant development of new economies in the region."*** And, to the extent Eastern does live up to its ambitions as a region-serving institution, will the HECC and Legislature recognize and reward university efforts toward a fuller embrace of their regional roles, including educating rapidly growing segments of first generation students?

***Will Eastern have the capacity and resources to both rebuild on-campus enrollment and remain competitive in the growing on-line market?*** All institutions face balancing acts of one sort or another and all must find ways to manage the risk of investing just enough to keep various endeavors alive but only on life support.

***Allowing for the need for the new board and president to take charge and set the course for the future, is there reason to expect that course to be more stable and durable than what Eastern has experienced in recent memory?*** The report is forthright in recognizing the instability and uncertainty of enrollment, finances, planning and leadership in recent history, which, in itself, should keep the issue of stability and durability at the forefront of the school and its supporters.