



*ONE COMMUNITY SERVING ONE UNIVERSITY*

Thank you Evan, Sam and DeAnna for your comments and introductions. And thank you Tom for coming today to offer your remarks.

Good morning and special greetings to the new members of our family and community who were just introduced. I am sure that you will find EOU—and our region—a dynamic and open place to work, to live, to share, to learn. Welcome to our returning faculty members—it is good to see you back on campus with your renewed sense of energy. And a special welcome back to Professors Rosemary Powers, Laura Mahrt, Steve Tanner, Peter Johnson, and Jan Dinsmore, who are returning from their sabbaticals. I know from the various reports I have received that you were extremely fruitful in your research and scholarship pursuits, and I look forward to hearing more from you about your experiences and newly gained insights. And welcome to all of our administrative faculty and staff members whose dedication to service and commitment to our university is unheralded and an asset that we cannot undervalue.

It is with a great deal of enthusiasm and excitement that we gather here today, as one community committed to our University and to officially open our 84<sup>th</sup> academic year.

As we embark on a new year to meet new challenges and set of pathway for new goals, we should also take time to reflect on the significant accomplishments that we had in the academic year just concluded. Just a sample of these, but clearly not limited to, include the following:

- Last year, we conferred 758 degrees; the most in the history of Eastern.
- EOU's 2013 Biology graduates placed in the top 25 percent in the nationwide Major Field Test in the sub-discipline of molecular biology

and genetics, with an overall ranking in the top 40 percent. EOU's Biology students exceeded the test scores of students from all other universities in Oregon.

- Alumnus and composer Jesse Jones won the Rome Prize for his work "Of the Soul." Jones is a doctoral candidate at Cornell University and teaches at the University of South Carolina.
- EOU expanded its MBA program with a new location serving Central Oregon. Students connect via satellite from a "smart" classroom at the COCC Crook County Open Campus Building in Prineville.
- We have worked hard to renovate and update Pierce Library, Zabel Hall, Hoke Union; and Quinn updates are well underway -- taking care of what we already have, increasing efficiencies and creating a more conducive learning and working environment.
- EOU was represented at 9 international scholarly symposiums and over 50 national academic conferences where faculty and many times, students, presented papers and scholarly work and research findings.
- Richard Hermens, Professor Emeritus, was in the 2012 class of American Chemical Society Fellows. Dr. Hermens taught chemistry at EOU for 35 years. The 2013 American Chemical Society Fellows Class will include our own Dr. Anna Cavinoto. EOU is the ONLY university in the State of Oregon which can claim two ACS Fellows.
- A cast of 62 students and faculty, including a 10-piece band, took their "Totally 80's Rewind" show on the road to Alaska, touring through Juneau, Ketchikan and Wrangell.
- Our student athletes also performed remarkably well in their fields of competition:
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> place finish in Cascade Conference All-Sport Trophy – 1<sup>st</sup> place finish among state schools
  - 25<sup>th</sup> in Learfield Cup – Highest finish in EOU history
  - Women's basketball had a second consecutive Elite 8 finish at the NAIA National Championship

- Men's basketball was ranked #1 in NAIA National poll for 5 consecutive weeks
- 20 performance All-Americans
- 22 All-Conference selections
- 3 Individual NAIA National Champions
- And, our student athletes performed as well in the classroom:
  - 32 NAIA Scholar-Athletes
  - 80 Academic All-Conference honors
  - Overall GPA of 3.13
  - 165 individuals earned Dean's List status
  - 8 teams named as NAIA All-Scholar Teams
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> place finish in Presidents' Cup
- And they supported our community with over 5,000 hours of community service.
- EOU's support of and the hard work of our faculty at the Annual Ladd Marsh Bird Festival, yielded the largest number of participants, 361, in its 8-year history. 22 percent of these were first-time guests to the festival from outside of our county.
- We awarded the first certificates to students in computer programming through EOU's innovative public-private partnership with Cayuse Technologies at the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation outside Pendleton.
- Our student-run campus radio station KEOL celebrated 40 years of independent broadcasting.
- EOU's Foundation received a \$934,000 scholarship endowment from Charles and Rhoda Chollet. This gift is the third largest ever received by EOU and is designated to help students majoring in science and education programs.
- Our Eastern Promise initiative received \$4 million in funding for early college engagement partnership with InterMountain Education Service District, Blue Mountain and Treasure Valley community colleges. \$2

million of these funds are to assist in current operations, and the additional \$2 million is slated to grow and expand the program at locations across the state.

While this is truly a short list of our accomplishments, it is clear we have much to be proud of and to celebrate in what we have achieved last year. And, as we think about all of our accomplishments, it is clear that our university, despite the fierce challenges we face, continues to hold true to our ethical values and commitment to serving students by providing an exceptional educational environment; we hold true to the advancement of scholarship through inquiry and investigation; we develop a sense of community for all of us—students, faculty and staff—which enables us to test new theories and provide the foundation for exploration of new fields and engage new ventures.

As you all know and have become accustomed to, in preparing formal remarks like today's Opening and State of the University Address, I seek inspiration and focus by connecting to our past. I do not do this to lay claim to being an authority on the history of Eastern—heck, some of you in audience have worked and lived more of the history of EOU than what is documented—but I am truly moved by the robust and insightful stories individuals have told me and the memorials of words that I have found throughout our campus and community. My goal in drawing on these historical connections is to provide context to today's environment, to provide a continuing connection to our values, and to instill a sense of pride in who we are by highlighting where we have been and what we have gone through over the course of our history and to foster a sense of principle and purpose in the direction we are heading. These reminders encourage us to maintain a thoughtful approach to the challenges we face and the opportunities that we are able to seize. And, above all, I want us to have a sense of intention and importance for our actions, goals, and ambitions as we move forward as one unified scholarly community rather than a loose confederation of areas linked together by vague and varying notions of what a university is. We are indeed are one community joined together to support and promote the ideals and values of our University.

As such, and in this spirit, today I offer the student creed immortalized by the Class of 1947. The creed states:

This, my college, shall help me to honor the truth, appreciate the beautiful, value the good, that I, equipped with knowledge and inspired by her ideals, may daily prepare for life's opportunities.

To this my college, I will give fervor to uphold her traditions, enthusiasm to maintain her sportsmanship, zeal to endear the sprits of friendship found within her halls.

To her I pledge my deep respect, my sincere support, [and] my lasting loyalty.

While this creed was offered by and for students, I believe it speaks well to each of us, regardless of our position and role here at EOU and offers sound guidance for our commitment to supporting students, achieving our educational aims and scholarly and professional pursuits, and serving our varied regions and immediate communities. I make particular note that this creed was developed--and literally etched in stone--during a time in which our university, indeed, the entire academy, was in great transition due to a convergence of factors. These factors included significant changes in the demographics of higher education, political calls for accountability, and significant decreased funding. For example: President Truman frequently and publicly admonished universities and created multiple commissions on accountability, access, costs, etc.; returning military personnel flooded college campuses that resulted in fundamental changes in higher educational structures and programs; and states were reducing allocations to higher education, despite significant increases in enrollments and basic capital needs. At Eastern, these trends were manifested in considerable changes to our curriculum, as we were required to serve more students with declining state funds, and the university was called upon to meet the postwar needs of the region in many new and varied ways. Through all of these changes, Eastern embraced these challenges and—as illustrated by

this creed— remained committed to the ethics and values that make our community special and lead us to cherish the unique nature of our university.

As we embark on this, our 84<sup>th</sup> Academic Year, we face circumstances remarkably similar to those facing our predecessors in the late 1940s. At a time when the value of a university degree is being questioned across the country, President Obama has launched new initiatives focused on university accountability and accessibility and created several task forces and commissions on postsecondary accountability and accompanying legislative actions are winding their way through our nation's capital. Yet, overt calls for increased state investment are muted, despite increase enrollments and the role and scope of passive technology in the delivery of information framed as education is greatly expanding, driving a further commoditization of education, and, in our own state, substantial governance reforms have, and will continue, to alter the way in which we connect to the state and our citizens in many and significant ways. The parallels are clear between the issues and challenges that faced our University in the late 1940s and the ones we face today. What is clear is that our predecessors came together and articulated the Creed as a symbol of their commitment to be one community for a common purpose and to focus all of their energies to this cause, committed to acting as a single community in working to overcome the obstacles before them.

Today, as we face our own challenges and attempt to seize our own opportunities, we too must think, work, and act as one community. The challenges and opportunities we face affect and impact all of us; not just one department, one unit, one employee group. We are, indeed, one community with many component parts committed to our University. Each of us offers a unique perspective on solutions to our challenges and methods for seizing our opportunities, and your voices need to be heard and not squandered. This is more important now than ever as we prepare for the new academic year where we find ourselves dealing with complex workplace and bargaining issues as well as meeting our fiscal challenges. As we will not shy away from our challenges, and we will solve our issues, each of us will play a crucial role. Overcoming our challenges and realizing opportunities that are afforded us will require dedication, thought and input from all of us.

As a community, and as a family, it is expected that we will disagree on various things and aspects of how to achieve our goals. It is how we conduct ourselves during these times that will define us and set the example for others. As one community, it is important for all of us to participate in shared governance, serving on committees, or taking the time to write me an email with your thoughts as these are all ways in which we need to engage in the future of our university.

There are many things that we can, and must, control. As we ended the last academic year, we articulated an update to our sustainability plan that we must maintain diligence in implementing. We must remain committed to providing resources to ensure that we are able to continue to deliver on our promise to our students of an exceptional educational experience. To maintain and deliver that promise, however, we must focus our programmatic, curricular, and co-curricular efforts. As we discussed last year, we cannot offer every program and every course, every service and every function, further diluting our abilities and scarce resources—not just financial resources but most particularly our human resources. I know that this will not be an easy task nor will it be a comfortable task for any of us. We all will be asked to examine our assumptions and perspectives and to alter our thinking and to embrace change, exactly as we ask our students to do in our classrooms. This process is not easy, just as the process of true learning our students embrace is not easy. Just as effective learning requires that students leave their comfort zones, effective institutional change will require each of us—members of our university community—to leave our comfort zones as well. I believe, however, that by committing to our core values and ideals, as epitomized in the 1947 student creed, we will be able to control to the greatest extent possible the changes that are confronting us.

Not the least of these changes are occurring at the statewide level. As you all know, in Oregon's 2013 legislative session, two bills were passed that hold great significance for our University—Senate Bill 270 and House Bill 3120. In essence, these two bills have changed the statewide landscape of university governance and operations for public universities. Since our inception, we have been governed by the State Board of Higher

Education, under the direction of the Oregon University System Chancellor's Office. The combination of these two bills, in essence, shifts these roles to other bodies. As of July 1, 2014, three universities will be governed by their own independent boards of trustees. Also on that date, a newly formed and empowered Higher Education Coordinating Council will assume oversight of all post-secondary educational institutions, including the allocation of state appropriations, mission and program approval, and accountability for the campus and system achievement compacts. These two bills did not define the long-term governance structure for Eastern and Oregon's three other technical and regional universities. Over the course of this year, through multiple legislative and State Board of Higher Education committees, our governance structure will be defined. It is my intent this Fall term to engage all of our stakeholders in discussions about various governance models, aimed at the creation of a governance model best suited to Eastern in meeting our goals across the state, in overcoming our challenges and in seizing the opportunities before us.

There are, generally speaking, three models before us: the independent board; a consortium board comprised of two-to-four of the regional universities, or an affiliation with one of the larger universities and their individual board. Each of these models presents opportunities as well as challenges. Through various forums and discussions with all of our stakeholders—students, faculty, staff, community members, statewide leaders, and many others—it is my charge to listen and formulate a proposal for our governance structure. This proposal will be based on our mission and related objectives, as well as the unique challenges and opportunities we face. I believe that our governance structure must enable and support the strategies we have developed, to better enable our long-term success and viability. Ultimately, the decisions concerning our governance rest, as they should, with the current State Board of Higher Education and with our state-wide elected officials. However, it is imperative that we are engaged in this process and that we provide meaningful insights, recommendations, and a well-articulated proposal based on sound logic and reasoning. This process will, in our terms, be short—over the course of this academic year—but must nonetheless be in-depth and inclusive process.

The continued implementation of our sustainability plans and the development of governance proposals are two large and overarching matters that will consume a considerable amount of our time and energy. But we cannot allow these to stop or hinder our continued and important work. In nine days, we will welcome our freshman class—over 400 strong. We will also welcome numerous new students to Eastern who are transferring from other institutions. And, on September 30<sup>th</sup>, we will welcome back all of our returning students and again, for the third year in a row, our enrollments will surpass 4,000 students. Through the Eastern Promise, we will also engage nearly 6,000 high school students throughout the entire region, assisting them in preparing for their own college careers as we reach out to over 1,000 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders and their families by planting the seeds that will encourage them to extend their thinking and planning for college. We have work that needs to be done to bolster our retention and graduation rates. Our current work with community colleges has provided a foundation for continued growth in transfer students, and we need to continue to find pathways for these individuals to reach their educational goals. The competition for students continues to intensify, and we must refine our approach and develop new strategies and niches.

We have recorded many significant accomplishments. Our graduates, our scholarly activities, our impact on the many communities we serve are encompassed in all of our accomplishments. Last year, as mentioned early, we awarded 758 degrees, and each one of you, in very important ways, impacted those students and made a difference in their lives and in their families and in their communities. They leave us with a sense of pride and gratitude. They leave us with a sense of community and place, built on the interactions they had with you, our faculty and staff. They will remember and cherish the personal connections and lasting friendships that they made while studying and learning at Eastern. We cannot forget this simple fact: that each one of us impacts our students in very positive and important ways. Our impact on the community is witnessed by the many civic and non-profit organizations that are able to exist because of our support through volunteerism, internships, research and leadership. Our efforts can be seen in the economic successes in many businesses throughout eastern Oregon who have benefited from students and faculty projects and significant and important insights. Communities

have taken great pride in their cultural activities, which is based, and many times contingent, on our work and dedication. And we have advanced the academy through our scholarly activities and, just as importantly, created the next generation of researchers by our commitment to involving students in this important work.

As we face the challenges ahead of us during the upcoming year, we must continually remember that we are, in fact, one community, with many essential parts, serving one university. We are working together, living and learning together, and doing so for the benefit of our students, our region, and our state. We should be continually inspired by the ideals that are the bedrock of Eastern—learning and engagement—and remain committed to our traditions—of service to our students and region—and reinforce our spirit of friendship and collegiality. In doing so, we will live up to the words and spirit of the 1947 student creed, emblazoned in the center of our campus for all to see, and we will commit our loyalty to our university and our continued spirit and immeasurable impact on the countless lives and communities that we have impacted over the past 83 years.

Thank you for your dedication to Eastern. I wish you all a very successful and prolific year. Let Eastern's 84<sup>th</sup> Academic Year be among her best.

Thank you and please join Cindy and I for more refreshments outside and our Constitution Day celebration at the Flag Pole at 11.