

IFS Update

Senators,

Unfortunately I am unable to attend today's Senate meeting as I am traveling back from Seaside, Oregon after giving an invited talk on the Economic Impact of Festivals at the Oregon Festival and Event Association annual meeting. I apologize for not being able to provide an IFS report in person. I hope you will ponder the below missive, which has weighty implications on the future of EOU. It is not my attentive to be alarmist; instead, I need to alert you to potential changes in higher education structure and governance which may adversely effect the future of Eastern Oregon University.

Legislation which will substantially change the scope and character of the Oregon University System is moving forward like a chugging locomotive that won't be able to be stopped.

From my perspective the movement toward institutional governing boards, with the University of Oregon and Portland State University at the forefront, has gained momentum, with the House version of supporting legislation being reported out of committee with a favorable recommendation. This afternoon the Senate version of the bill (SB 270) is being discussed by the Senate Education and Workforce Development Committee, and I expect that version to move forward for a floor vote in the foreseeable future.

I would advise the Senate to allocate time on its agenda in the near future to discuss the concept, and moreover, mechanics of institutional governing boards. I suggest that President Davies be part of that discussion, as it not only will change external relations of EOU with regard to our relations with 'sister' schools, but institutional governance as well. This is a very (politically) delicate and potentially weighty issue that the Senate needs to articulate a position on in the very near future. I would be glad to lead a work session discussing the issue of institutional governing boards if you wish to be proactive in this matter.

There are approximately ****100**** bills in the legislature which may potentially effect higher education, and more specifically EOU, during this session. IFS has articulated a statement in support of Governor Kitzhaber's 40/40/20 goal which explicitly recognizes the special role that OUS regional institutions have. However, the future of shared governance of higher education in Oregon, i.e. whether there will even be a state board of higher education or replaced by a 'one size fits all' education scheme, is in a state of flux, with dynamic and long-reaching changes emerging on the immediate horizon. While the nature of the academe assumes that less meetings are the preferred strategy, the stakes are so weighty for the future of the institution, I must wonder whether additional meetings of the Senate during this legislative session are warranted. Being reactive instead of proactive is a potential recipe for disaster.

IFS will meet next week (March 15-16) in Monmouth, with several key legislators expected to attend. Moreover, IFS is being proactive with regard to making necessary and needed changes in its Constitution and Bylaws, which are outdated, extremely vague, and in need of revision. I will seek the input of the Senate as we move forward, especially with regard to equity in representation for the regional institutions on IFS.

On a positive, note IFS will meet at EOU May 10-11. A cultural shift is underway at IFS as we attempt to proactively engage with stakeholders on matters of serious concern related to the future of higher

education in Oregon. While deliberation certainly has its place in democracy, and moreover, higher education shared governance, the time is ripe for 'heavy lifting' and serious contemplation of the implications of shifts in the legislative horizon that impact the future of our institution. Sitting back and having our destiny determined for us by individuals in the legislature without the knowledge and insights about our unique institution and its mission is a recipe for disaster. I urge the Senate to take a proactive stance at this key juncture, or our future will be decided for, not by, us.