

## **IFS STATEMENT TO HECC, APRIL 12, 2014**

Chair Nesbitt, Executive Director Cannon and Members of the Commission:

For the record, my name is Jeff Dense, Professor of Political Science at Eastern Oregon University and President of the Interinstitutional Faculty Senate (IFS).

HB 4018 significantly expanded options regarding the decision, conditions, and implementation of institutional governing boards for the Technical and Regional Universities (TRUs). IFS keenly understand how financial thresholds such as exceeding a percentage of reserve funds by a stipulated date will be a focus of current negotiations between the Oregon State Board of Higher Education and the presidents of Eastern Oregon University and Southern Oregon University to ensure fiscal stability for these two institutions. Given the transition of authority from the State Board to HECC, IFS respectfully urges you to contemplate how stipulated fiscal metrics may adversely affect the third conditional "leg" suggested by HB 4018: the stability of the university's academic programs. Placing the financial threshold "bar" too high, or the timeframe for achieving such a fiscal goal too short, could conceivably result in a fiscally challenged institution deciding to eliminate academic programs in order to maintain an institutional governing board, and concurrently, reduce educational opportunities for students. From IFS perspective, this course of action makes achievement of the State's 40-40-20 goal increasingly difficult. IFS recommends if fiscal metrics are employed as a condition of institutional board approval for EOU and SOU, that a multiple year, i.e. through the 2015-17 budgetary cycle, be utilized to evaluate institutional governing board performance and fiscal stability, and academic program reductions be avoided as a 'lever' to maintain the existence of institutional boards. Our students are Oregon's future. We must be ever vigilant to ensure affordable and accessible educational opportunities for Oregon citizens, especially in the regions served by the TRUs. Given HECC's impending role and responsibility with regard to annual evaluation of institutional governing boards, we believe a long term prism on institutional governing board performance will provide the foundation for the success of future generations of students at Oregon's public universities.

As the baton of higher education coordination is passed to HECC, IFS believes the ongoing transition of authority provides a unique opportunity to ensure long-term collaboration and cooperation between Oregon's public universities. A tripartite horizontal organizational structure consisting of a Presidents Council comprised of the presidents of all of Oregon's public universities, working in collaboration with the Provost Council and IFS, each with clearly articulated roles and responsibilities and jointly meeting on an annual basis, would provide significant synergistic opportunities. Collaboration and cooperation between all of Oregon's public universities is essential if we are to reach our 40-40-20 goals. Without significant collaboration and coordination between campuses, in an atmosphere where fiscal resources are scarce, we may ultimately cannibalize each other. This is not in the best interest of students, and moreover, the citizens of Oregon.

In order for the state to achieve its 40-40-20 goals, a spirit of collaboration and coordination within public higher education is essential to the future success of the state of Oregon. While we understand development of this collaborative governance

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concept may fall on the shoulders of the state legislature, and its implementation to HECC, IFS remains fully committed to this collaborative spirit, in order that we may protect the best interests of our most valuable resource: our students.

Thank you for your time, and I would be glad to answer any questions you may have.