

Board of Trustees of Southern Oregon University
Board of Trustees Listening Session
Thursday, January 19, 2023

MINUTES

Call to Order/Roll/Declaration of a Quorum

Chair Santos called the listening session to order at 3:46 p.m. He thanked all the trustees for attending the special listening session. He explained the board’s interest in hearing from university constituents and explained the format of the extended public comment session.

The secretary called the roll and a quorum was verified.

Daniel Santos	Present	Shawn Franks	Present
Rick Bailey	Present	Andrew Gay	Present
Brent Barry	Present	Christina Medina	Absent
Jon Bullock	Present	Mimi Pieper	Present
Katherine Cable	Present	Liz Shelby	Present
Iris Maria Chavez	Present	Barry Thalden	Present
Sheila Clough	Present	Bill Thorndike	Present
Debra Lee	Present		

Public Comment

Sara Adams, President of Associated Professors of SOU (APSOU), senior instructor of accounting, and SOU alum, said that as a CPA she understands financial issues. This is her tenth academic year and President Bailey is the fourth president she has worked under. She questioned the process of the realignment plan and faculty involvement. She asked how this realignment is different from past restructuring. Ms. Adams pressed for detailed accounting of cost savings. She implored the trustees to explore the consequences of the proposed cuts and diminished programs.

Brian Fedorek, Faculty Senate Chair, recalled President Bailey’s welcome back breakfast where the President referred to the five major groups on campus being APSOU, Faculty Senate, SEIU, ASSOU, and Staff Assembly. These groups got together last week. He summarized that there was a feeling of lack of transparency. Although he acknowledged the information had been posted on the website, lack of involvement with leaders of these groups left them feeling that the process lacked transparency. They thought the process was very “top down.” He urged the board to encourage the administration to invite the groups to the table to hear from them. Mr. Fedorek acknowledged the Academic Affairs “data dump” at the end of fall term and encouraged the other groups to do the same. He said he’d like to see more discussion and debate regarding the plan.

Chandler Campbell, a second-generation SOU student, talked about the state of the University’s internet infrastructure. He stated that SOU students and faculty get a quarter of what people at OSU received five years ago in regards to internet services.

He said that not having fast internet is like not having running water and that SOU's wireless and guest networks are not secure. Mr. Campbell shared his concern about [internet] privacy at SOU and compared it to not having a fence with a hole, but rather, never having built the fence. He stated that this is important because technology is important and when substandard services are provided, it sends a message that SOU accepts substandard results here. He does not think anyone wants that.

Jesse Longhurst, Associate Professor of Education, new chair of Graduate Education Programs, SOU Alum, and former high school teacher, talked about the absolute vital role SOU plays in growing and advancing the education workforce in the region and state. SOU started as a normal school when teachers were scarce in Southern Oregon and that the need remains, as there is a national and worldwide teacher shortage. The number of applicants in the education department is down which is in-line with trends. Her silver-lining is that 100 percent of graduates from SOU's licensure programs are employed. This year 80 percent of students are employed on temporary licenses before leaving the program. Local districts need SOU to send them classroom teachers, autism specialists, counselors, principals, and superintendents. Changes are being made to make education programs more accessible. This fall, the Master of Arts in Teaching program will be available in a hybrid format allowing anyone, anywhere in the state, to attend SOU. The program is working not only to be the only teacher preparation program within 200 miles and the only program in the state for which distance becomes irrelevant. She stated that the education department relies on its colleagues in general education, math, English, and physical education for subject-area specialists. She cautioned that hollowing out programs affects everyone. Ms. Longhurst concluded that the community has relied on SOU for well over a hundred years and that she thinks they need to be able to do so for the next hundred.

Victor Chang, Assistant Professor in Clinical Mental Health Counseling and long-time resident and parent, agreed with comments made by his colleagues and echoed that education plays a vital role in the region, statewide, and across the country. He addressed President Bailey directly with appreciation for Dr. Bailey's authenticity, integrity, and truthfulness but also expressed his disappointment in the content of the messaging so far. He stated that he had been paying attention to the process and hoped there would be more concrete plans, information, data, prioritized strategies to respond to at this time.

Luke Williams, Coordinator of Innovative Program Development, speaking solely for himself and not as part of Staff Assembly, acknowledged that SOU has a lot of unclassified administrators who are at-will employees. He asked the board to consider ending the practice of at-will and to adopt a policy that no one will be separated from the University except for cause.

Erik Palmer, Associate Professor of Communication, has been with SOU for eleven years. His main message was to advocate for the board to be more active in setting expectations around marketing. He does not believe he is the only member of the

faculty that shares the opinion that SOU can improve. Historically, SOU has not been very strategic about marketing or tracking data, calculating analytics, showing ROI in reaching target audiences, and growing the student body in a systematic way. He acknowledged that the data may be out there but perhaps the board could be more transparent and disciplined about sharing the information as it would be worthwhile. He believes marketing is an investment, it should generate higher returns than is put into it, and that SOU should be investing more.

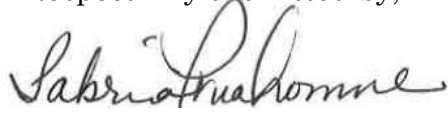
Chair Santos invited others to make comments. Ms. Longhurst agreed with Mr. Palmer's comments regarding marketing. Changes in the education programs will increase enrollment but only if people know about them. Graduate programs in particular have suffered due to lack of marketing with the exception of those with Academic Partnerships. Departments are left to market without a lot of help, and don't have the time, funding, or expertise.

There being no further comments, Chair Santos thanked the trustees for making time for the listening session. He expressed appreciation for all the comments and said that this session would not be the end of the conversation.

Chair Santos adjourned the meeting at 4:25 p.m.

Date: March 17, 2023

Respectfully submitted by,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sabrina Prud'homme". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Sabrina Prud'homme
University Board Secretary