

**Board of Trustees  
Academic and Student Affairs Committee Meeting  
Thursday, October 19, 2023**

**MINUTES**

**Call to Order/Roll/Declaration of a Quorum**

Trustee Thalden called the meeting to order at 12:02 p.m. and welcomed the new trustee, Jason Mendoza; other trustees; faculty and staff; regular presenters, and special guests, Dr. Matt Stillman, Zac Olson, Dr. Carrie Vath, and Andrew Gay. Trustee Thalden recognized Dr. Sue Walsh, who will retire at the end of the calendar year.

Board Secretary Sabrina Prud'homme called the roll and a quorum was verified.

Committee Members:

Brent Barry, Chair	Absent	Iris Maria Chavez	Present
Debra Lee	Present	Andrew Gay	Present
Mimi Pieper	Present	Barry Thalden	Present
Jason Mendoza	Present		

**Other Trustees in Attendance:** President Rick Bailey and Board Chair, Danny Santos

**Public Comment**

No members of the public offered comments.

**Consent Agenda (Action)**

Trustee Pieper moved to approve the consent agenda consisting of meeting minutes from June 15, 2023. Trusted Lee seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

**Academic Affairs Report**

Provost Sue Walsh provided updates on position searches, announcing Andrew Gay as a finalist for the Director of Arts and Communication position. President Bailey updated the committee on the search progress for a new provost, noting that semi-finalist interviews were completed, four finalists are scheduled for campus visits; a selection decision is anticipated in mid-November.

Provost Walsh shared an update regarding the statewide Provost's Council, highlighting collaborative efforts among the community colleges' chief academic officers and university provosts to enhance education and access across Oregon. She emphasized the importance of their work to eliminate the barriers of transfers and fostering stronger relationships through trust and mutual respect. Additionally, Provost Walsh reported on successful Academic Affairs retreats for various schools, noting positive collaboration among department chairs in creatively aligned schools following the SOU Forward organizational changes.

**Student Affairs Report**

Dr. Carrie Vath provided organizational updates on the departmental reorganization of SOU Career Connections, expressing excitement about having Director Stacey Westrum and Coordinator Ariel Bloomer on board. The dean also noted the transition of the SOU

Housing and Dining Departments from Finance and Administration into the Student Affairs portfolio, the integration of which is to improve student support and retention. She discussed the ASPIRE conference, emphasizing SOU's recognition as one of the best universities for queer and trans students and the significant number of students registered with the SOU Disability Resource Center (DRC). Dr. Vath highlighted the need for showcasing the Stevenson Union in future meetings and engaged with trustees in a robust discussion about career connections, economic development, and addressing students' mental health concerns. She outlined a proactive educational campaign on anxiety and depression to encourage students to register with the DRC, as positive retention strategies.

### **Enrollment Management Report**

Zac Olson expressed gratitude for Provost Walsh's mentorship and reviewed fall enrollment data, noting new student enrollment at 1,098 students overall, which is a 10.6 percent increase from 2022. Transfers, despite a national decline, were up at SOU, driven by intentional strategies such as outreach, partnerships, and collaboration with Ruffalo Noel Levitz (RNL). Top feeder schools for transfer students included community colleges, with a focus on expanding seamless partnerships. The coding of first points of contact helps track retention and graduation rates. Provost Walsh clarified responded to Trustee Mendoza that the Oregon Promise Grant is currently for community colleges only.

Dr. Stillman emphasized the importance of looking beyond immediate enrollment numbers and highlighted positive trends, including OLLI and ASC enrollment increases. The graduation rate is normal for SOU and retention also looks normal for SOU, as continuing student numbers are down because of the [COVID declines in the] pipeline not because SOU is not retaining students. SOU is in rebound mode and it will take a couple of years to increase new students that will be counted as continuing students. Stillman estimated a 2 percent increase in headcount and expressed optimism about exceeding expectations, especially with the new General Education (GenEd) program's impact on graduation rates. Provost Walsh emphasized the engagement students will have with the new GenEd program, which will help with continuing students and sequentially, will move students through to graduation more quickly.

### **Information, Discussion, and Action Items**

#### Enrollment Council Overview

Co-chairs of the Enrollment Council, Drs. Walsh and Woolf, outlined 2030 enrollment goals as presented in the Strategic Enrollment Management Plan. These goals included increasing headcount to 7,000 from approximately 5,200; increasing full-time equivalent enrollment (FTE) to 4,500 from 3,300 students; increasing the retention rate to 81 percent from 67 percent; and increasing the six-year graduation rate to 60 percent from the current 46 percent. Discussion ensued around right-sizing enrollment for SOU and strategies for achieving targets, including marketing, micro-credentials, and certificates. Zac Olson highlighted recruitment efforts, including pre-college youth programs and partnerships with K-12 schools. Drs. Vath and Stillman reported on the subcommittee for student success and retention, describing initiatives including the Navigate software and specific efforts to address holds impacting registration and persistence.

Dr. Dan DeNeui and Dr. Woolf discussed efforts of the Academic Program Planning Subcommittee, which has been focusing on market analytics for academic programs

and demand through Lightcast. The subcommittee also supported a new program proposal form aligned with institutional goals, which has a preamble that the proposal must contain alignment with the institutional mission and strategic plan, market and student demand, competition, recruitment and retention factors, and resource needs. It also requires that the five questions in the *SOU Forward* are answered, equity, diversity, and inclusion efforts will be explicitly stated, and projections such as headcount and the faculty-to-student ratio are also required. The new form ensures quantitative data where it may not have been available before and President Bailey added that as SOU is building this culture of accountability, there will be an identification when the university is not on track and the SOU will not continue to invest.

Josh Lovern and Karinda Decker reviewed the changes to the financial aid process that support enrollment and retention such as a campaign to increase early filing of federal and state financial aid applications to increase early filing rates and prepare students for financial opportunities as well as financial aid process changes. Early filing is important to maximize financial aid, as some funds are first come, first served. The goal is to train and prepare students for the unknown and each of these strategies is a direct effort to close a gap or maximize opportunities. Trustees then engaged in discussions focused on aligning efforts to enhance student success and creating and achieving enrollment goals.

#### Overview of New Program Approval Process

Dr. Walsh walked the board through the process to approve a new academic program, as illustrated in the meeting materials. Starting with the proposal formation on campus by faculty, if the Academic and Student Affairs Committee approves a program on behalf of the board, it goes on to the statewide Provost's Council. If the Provost's Council approves a program, it goes on to the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC), which can step in to mediate before resolution. To the extent possible, the approval process is timed strategically to meet with the board's meeting schedule as well as the HECC's.

#### General Education Transformation and Fall 2023 Implementation

The transformation goals of Southern Oregon University's GenEd model aim to fulfill strategic directions of the strategic plan and meet cultural competency requirements. The objectives include reducing GenEd credits, enhancing the transparency of Gen Ed and making purposeful learning goals, so the model is more attractive to prospective students and provides maximum transferability.

The model has shifted from disciplinary strands to skill-based capacities, each of which was presented in the meeting materials. Trustee Gay showed 167 newly-approved courses across academic units, many involving significant peer-reviewed course redevelopment to meet specific learning outcomes and maximum transferability. The launch of a new website and troubleshooting during summer registrations addresses challenges with the registration process. Subcommittee efforts focused on refining language, handbooks, and source rubrics. President Bailey emphasized the achievement in aligning efforts and utilizing the new GenEd model as a selling point, emphasizing student-centric goals over program-centric outcomes. Trustees praised the transformation and underscored the importance of

using it to enhance SOU's marketing efforts and attractiveness. Responding to Board Chair Santos, Trustee Gay noted that the Gen Ed transformation will support SOU's current accreditation process on the assessment side.

#### Overview of Faculty Workload Efforts

Provost Walsh provided an update on faculty workload efforts and the associated workgroup, highlighting the nationwide issue of faculty feeling overworked and overwhelmed. The group explored potential changes in processes and policies related to faculty workload, and sought input through various means, including listening sessions, email feedback, polling, and discussions. A comprehensive report with more recommendations than anticipated was submitted in mid-June. Meetings with Faculty Senate Chair, Jackie Apodaca, revealed a total of twenty recommendations. The initial focus will address low-hanging fruits in the fall, leaving more complex issues for future consideration. President Bailey highlighted the transformative period at SOU and emphasized the need for a holistic approach to address workload challenges amidst broader institutional changes. Trustee Gay emphasized the importance of considering faculty exhaustion and workload distribution from a resource management perspective, and urged a careful evaluation of tasks for alignment with faculty roles and compensation. President Bailey expressed the value of resolving the allocation of faculty time and energy.

#### 2024-2025 Committee Meeting Schedule (Action)

Trustee Thalden reviewed the proposed meeting schedule included in the meeting materials. Committee members did not recommend any changes. Trustee Gay moved to approve the 2024-2025 meeting schedule as presented. Trustee Pieper seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

#### **Future Meeting**

Trustee Thalden announced that the next meeting of the committee will take place on January 18, 2024 at 12:00 p.m., and asked that if any trustee has ideas for agenda items, please send them to him or to the board secretary.

Chair Santos questioned how SOU and the board measure accountability after *SOU Forward*, as there is granularity in measuring improvement, retention, fiscal stability, and how can the board play a role in that cultural shift. He suggested that in a future meeting, the committee discuss what such metrics might look like for target-setting and specifically noted the importance of disaggregated data to measure EDI efforts.

#### **Adjournment**

Trustee Thalden adjourned the meeting at 3:01 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by,



Sabrina Prud'homme University Board Secretary