

**Board of Trustees  
Academic and Student Affairs Committee Meeting  
Thursday, January 18, 2024**

**MINUTES**

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

Chair Brent Barry called the meeting to order at 12:01 p.m. and welcomed attendees.

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

Committee Members:

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

**Other Trustees in Attendance:** President Rick Bailey, Chair Daniel Santos

**Public Comment**

No members of the public offered comments.

**Consent Agenda**

Trustee Lee moved to approve the consent agenda consisting of minutes from the committee's October 19, 2023 meeting. Trustee Mendoza seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

**Academic Affairs Report**

Dr. Susan Walsh reported on a variety of topics. She explained that the Tuition Advisory Council will convene their first meeting at the end of the month. The task is expected to be easier since it is the second year of the funding biennium and SOU's state revenue allocation is known. In the April meeting of the Academic and Student Affairs Committee, it is expected that curriculum will come forward for the committee's action: new degree programs in biomedical science as well as ecology, and a dozen certificates. Proposals now include the three points of the triangle and the five questions required in SOU Forward. Chair Barry expressed appreciation for Provost Walsh's leadership and noted she will be missed at SOU.

**Student Affairs Report**

Dean of Students, Dr. Carrie Vath, provided general updates. Most notably, she shared the student affairs observance of the Trans Day of Remembrance; Following up on the withdrawal survey, mental health remained the top reason why students withdrew from SOU in AY 2021-22 and AY 2022-23. Students utilizing the Student Health and Wellness Center also have a higher continuation rate than those who do not and 59 percent of students registered with the Disability Resource Center (DRC) did so for mental health. There was passive promotion to encourage students with anxiety or depression to see if they qualify for support. There was an increase in registrants with the DRC and in use of the Telus 24/7 crisis care, and as a result of this pilot, mental health is no longer the top reason for withdrawals.

**Enrollment Management Report**

Zac Olson, reviewed the enrollment funnel. One week into the winter term, SOU is up 17.1 percent in enrollment thus far. There have been three consecutive years of growth

and a 26 percent increase in SOU's first-year class from fall 2021 to fall 2023; he commended Dr. Woolf for guiding that work. Responding to Chair Barry, Mr. Olsen said the enrollment increases in winter are attributable to transfer students. Regarding the numbers for Fall Term 2024, SOU is chasing big numbers from last fall and the goal is 1,006 or an increase of 5.32 percent. Responding to Board Chair Santos, Mr. Olsen explained that enrollment from K-12 partnerships continues to grow.

Dr. Matt Stillman discussed the conclusion of Fall Term 2023. Although recruitment brought in a lot of new students, continuing enrollment continues decreasing overall. It is not a retention issue but a pipeline issue resulting from decreases in new student enrollment during COVID, leading to fewer in the continuing student pipeline, and SOU is still climbing its way out of that issue. Part of what SOU is seeing in fall numbers is an increase in OLLI and staff training and development credits; without these, enrollment would have looked flat but it's important to note that these do not always translate to revenue. Winter enrollment information is not reliable yet; although, Dr. Stillman did not see anything concerning at this time. Continuing student numbers in winter look great because the new students who began in the fall became continuing students in winter; this is part of rebuilding the pipeline.

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

### Enrollment Council Updates

Dr. Neil Woolf praised retiring Provost Walsh for being the best possible partner at SOU. Then, discussing the enrollment marketing subcommittee, Nicolle Aleman provided information that SOU is ramping up activities with more of a visual presence in SOU's local markets and providing internal help to departments. They are working on the integration of pre-college youth programs by building a communications architecture including the K-12 data-sharing partnerships and sharing back success data of districts' students.

Dr. Walsh discussed Financial Aid Office's creation of a forthcoming financial literacy course and their tracking of developments with the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), due to confusion at the federal government. In student success and retention, that team is using the withdrawal survey data Dr. Vath mentioned. They are also reviewing registration communications and holds to reduce enrollment barriers for students. Regarding academic strategies, Dr. Walsh highlighted the work that Dr. Dan DeNeui and Joe Jackson are doing to maximize faculty use of Lightcast's [workforce] data for academic planning.

Dr. DeNeui and Mr. Jackson demonstrated the Lightcast tool and explained how it helps them determine the right mix of academic programs to meet the demands of the region. Much discussion ensued among trustees about the business community's understanding of this data and SOU's use of it. It was suggested to Drs. DeNeui and Walsh that there is a tremendous opportunity to be an engine for a statewide workforce and economic development strategy with the granularity of information now available and to solidify bonds with the business community going into the legislative session.

### Discussion of Enrollment Targets

President Bailey introduced this topic noting that his thinking has evolved on the matter. Following the board's fall retreat, SOU is aiming toward creating three categories of metrics: a financial target; equity, diversity, and inclusion metrics; and with enrollment and student

success. This is a strategic enrollment planning simulation based on changing variables and what seems possible, similar to the financial pro forma. So, rather than providing a firm number by a finite date, this simulation is more sophisticated and can help determine where SOU's precious resources should be invested. Drs. Woolf, Stillman, and Vath explained that SOU can use this to plan and consider "what if" scenarios by adjusting the levers—or primary enrollment categories—which will help with decision-making and will allow SOU to be more accurate in its predictions. Much discussion ensued regarding the simulation, demographic shifts, and possible resource allocations based on its data, although, it is not a budgeting tool.

Chair Barry appreciated the attention to detail rather than throwing out a number that may not be achievable. President Bailey said he will seek the trustees' approval of this approach and model so the SOU team can continue its work. Chair Barry suggested accountability measures such as red-yellow-green indicators. Trustee Thalden commended the team.

### SOU Career Connections Update

Dr. Carrie Vath shared that recent investments in Career Connections have benefitted students, faculty, and staff. She compared the work of the department with that of prior years, noting more fall appointments, class visits and workshops, and the number of students served than the entire previous year. She reviewed student usage data such as class standing, type of help students are seeking, employer relations, and alumni services.

### *PEAK Program Service Usage*

Dr. Carrie Vath shared that the Professional Experience, Achievement, and Knowledge or PEAK on-campus internship program previously was under-resourced so the students were not served as well as they are today. This year 66 positions were funded and the professional development component was enhanced significantly with many robust services like a Moodle course, assessments, membership to the National Society for Leadership and Success.

### *First Destination Survey*

Ariel Bloomer noted that the SOU conducts a First Destination Survey to capture how new graduates fare in their careers within six months of graduation. It provides clear, consistent data on the outcomes associated with their college education on a standardized, national scale and is administered by the National Association of Colleges and Employers. It asks about types of employment (full- or part-time, contractor, etc.), those still seeking employment or education, and starting salary, which all inform the discussion about the value of higher education. Overall, SOU had a positive outcome rate of 92 percent (includes the work, continuing education, military, and volunteering); the current median salary reported was \$44K annually; and the response rate was lower than expected at 35.2 percent, but was much higher than last year. The collection period is usually around six months but was only two months for this administration of the survey; future surveys will return to the norm.

### Federal TRIO Program Overview

The federal Department of Education TRIO programs are federal outreach and student services programs designed to support individuals from historically disadvantaged backgrounds. TRIO includes eight programs that assist low-income individuals, first-generation college students, and individuals with disabilities progress through the academic pipeline from middle school to postbaccalaureate programs. A Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program, which supports students bound for doctoral

programs, and a Student Support Services Program are housed at SOU.

Dr. Walsh reviewed the Mc Nair program achievements: only 206 institutions have McNair programs and SOU is one of three in Oregon; 72 percent are low-income and first-generation students; there's a 95 percent graduation rate among program participants, and 96 percent attend graduate school. Dr. Carrie Vath reviewed the Success at Southern program achievements: over \$8M in grants have been awarded to SOU since the program began; over 2,500 students have participated in the program; the six-year graduation rate is 52 percent, exceeding the "all undergraduate" rate; and the first-time, full-time freshmen retention rate is 79 percent versus 67 percent for all SOU undergraduates. Much discussion ensued regarding the success of these programs, and their students.

#### Future Meetings

Chair Barry said the next meeting of the committee is scheduled to take place on April 18, 2024, at noon. Trustees who would like to suggest a specific item for a future meeting were asked to send them to the board secretary.

#### **Adjournment**

Chair Barry adjourned the meeting at 2:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by,



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Sabrina Prud'homme  
University Board Secretary

Date: April 18, 2024