



OFFICE OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Public Meeting Notice

May 1, 2026

TO: Southern Oregon University Board of Trustees
FROM: Sabrina Prud'homme, University Board Secretary
RE: Notice of Special Meeting of the Board of Trustees

The Southern Oregon University Board of Trustees will hold a special meeting on the date and at the location set forth below.

The purpose of the meeting is to conduct an extended public comment listening session to hear from the campus community about a proposed financial sustainability plan. This will be a hybrid meeting; those who wish to provide public comment are welcome to do so in person or remotely.

The meeting will occur as follows:

Tuesday, May 5, 2026

5:00 to 7:00 p.m.

SOU Ashland Campus, Hannon Library, DeBoer Room

1290 Ashland Street, Ashland, OR, 97520

To view the proceedings remotely, visit <https://sou.zoom.us/j/88199844812> at the time of the meeting.

For this hybrid meeting, the board will meet online while the board chair and university president will welcome any in-person commenters in the meeting room.

If special ADA accommodations are required for attendance to this meeting, please contact Holly Frazier at (541) 552-8055 at least 48 hours in advance.

Public Comment

Members of the public who wish to provide comments during the listening session are invited to sign up to speak or to submit their comments in writing at least 24 hours in advance of the meeting.

To sign up to deliver comments to the board, members of the public are encouraged to use the preferred sign-up methods, as appropriate.

- Preferred: Commenters who wish to speak live at the meeting should [fill out this form](https://forms.gle/9pRRwuzZKctYXpdW8).
[URL: <https://forms.gle/9pRRwuzZKctYXpdW8>]; or

- Preferred: Commenters who wish to provide written public comments should [upload written public comments to this form](https://forms.gle/9pRRwuzZKctYXpdW8).
[URL: <https://forms.gle/9pRRwuzZKctYXpdW8>].
- Commenters may also contact the Office of the Board of Trustees by phone at (541) 552-8055 and provide their name, email address, phone number, relationship to SOU, and the subject of their public comments to sign up to speak; or
- Commenters may also sign up via email at trustees@sou.edu and provide their name, email address, phone number, relationship to SOU, and the subject of their public comments when signing up.
- Sign-up requests or written comments may also be delivered in person or mailed to SOU Board of Trustees, 1250 Siskiyou Boulevard, Churchill Hall, Room 107, Ashland, OR 97520.



**Board of Trustees
Special Meeting
Public Comment Listening Session
May 5, 2026**



Special Meeting of the Board of Trustees

Tuesday, May 5, 2026

5:00 – 7:00 p.m. (or until business concludes)
DeBoer Room, Hannon Library, SOU Campus
Zoom: <https://sou.zoom.us/j/88199844812>

AGENDA

Persons wishing to provide live public comments in the meeting or in writing may sign up [here](#) or at trustees@sou.edu.
Please note: times are approximate and items may be taken out of order.

- | | | | |
|-----------|----------|---|---|
| 5:00 p.m. | 1 | Call to Order/Roll/Declaration of a Quorum | Chair Sheila Clough |
| | 1.1 | Welcome and Opening Remarks | |
| | 1.2 | Roll Call and Declaration of a Quorum | Sabrina Prud'homme,
SOU, Board Secretary |
| | 1.3 | Agenda Review | Chair Sheila Clough |
| 5:10 | 2 | Public Comment | |
| | 2.1 | Public Comment Listening Session Regarding
Proposed Financial Stability Plan | |
| | 2.1.1 | Invited Public Comment: Associated
Students of Southern Oregon University | Sophia Smith, ASSOU,
President |
| | 2.1.2 | Invited Public Comment: SOU Faculty
Senate | Dennis Slattery, SOU,
Faculty Senate Chair |
| | 2.1.3 | Invited Public Comment: Staff Assembly | Stephanie Hanigan, SOU,
Staff Assembly Chair |
| | 2.1.4 | Invited Public Comment: Associated
Professors of Southern Oregon University | Dr. Melissa Anderson,
APSOU, President |
| | 2.1.5 | Invited Public Comment: SOU Service
Employees International Union (Sub-local 84) | Sage TeBeest, SEIU,
President |
| | 2.1.6 | Other Public Comments | |
| 7:00 p.m. | 3 | Adjournment | Chair Sheila Clough |

**SOUTHERN OREGON UNIVERSITY
Transmittal of Senate Action for Informational Purposes**

Title: FACULTY SENATE RESOLUTIONS

SOU Faculty Senate Action: Approve

Motion originated by: Lisa Wileman

Motion: To accept the Resolutions and move them to the Board of Trustees

Motion seconded by: Alma Rosa Alvarez

Vote in Committee/Council (if applicable):

Submitted to the Board of Trustees by: Faculty Senate

Recommended by the Faculty Senate on: May 5, 2026

Vote in Senate (For/Against/Abstaining): 19/0/0

Forwarded to the President by:



Dennis Slattery, MBA, CPA, Chair of Faculty Senate

Date: May 5, 2026

Upon Presidential Receipt, the original is filed in the Office of the Vice President of Academic Affairs and Provost and copies are sent to the Chair of the Faculty Senate and Registrar.

Faculty Senate Resolutions

Resolution 1 — On Statutory Compliance Under ORS 352.011

WHEREAS, ORS 352.011(2) establishes Southern Oregon University as a comprehensive regional university that offers a full range of baccalaureate programs and graduate programs through the master's degree and the professional doctoral degree;

WHEREAS, ORS 352.089(2)(e) requires the Higher Education Coordinating Commission to ensure that program changes submitted by Western Oregon University, Southern Oregon University, or Eastern Oregon University comply with ORS 352.011;

WHEREAS, ORS 352.146 provides that the faculty may prescribe the course of study to be pursued in the university, subject to the governing board and ORS 352.089;

WHEREAS, the September 18, 2025 Board vote eliminating ten bachelor's degrees, twelve minors, and one graduate program was taken without reference to ORS 352.011 in the deliberation record;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Faculty Senate requests that the SOU Board of Trustees defer the May 8, 2026 vote pending: (a) a written legal opinion from SOU General Counsel addressing whether the September 18, 2025 cut and the contemplated Deloitte plan comply with ORS 352.011, ORS 352.089, and ORS 352.146; (b) written confirmation from the SOU Accreditation Liaison Officer of the status of NWCCU portal updates and any teach-out plans submitted in connection with the September 18, 2025 program eliminations; and (c) written confirmation from the Higher Education Coordinating Commission of its review under ORS 352.089(2)(e); and (d) the written rationale presented to the Board for each of the ten majors, twelve minors, and one graduate program eliminated September 18, 2025, including the supporting analysis of each program's compliance with ORS 352.011.

Resolution 2 — Fiduciary Duties, Due Diligence

WHEREAS, the Deloitte final report is scheduled for release May 4, 2026, and the Board of Trustees vote is scheduled for May 8, 2026, providing four days between report and vote on an entire university restructuring plan;

WHEREAS, the President has stated on the public record that “there will be little to no opportunity to make wholesale revisions to the plan”;

WHEREAS, internal reviews of Deloitte and Company analyses, reporting and other information have identified multiple material errors;

WHEREAS, the September 18, 2025, Board vote eliminating ten majors, twelve minors, and one graduate program was decided on a packet window of approximately twenty-four hours;

WHEREAS, the institution has acknowledged on the record that the 2023 SOU Forward cuts “weren’t necessarily tied to a well-defined strategic vision”;

WHEREAS, President Bailey has acknowledged on the record to the Finance and Administration Committee that announcing the \$7.5 million Employee Retention Credit funding received in August 2025 would have been “inappropriate”;

WHEREAS, ORS 352.107 establishes fiduciary duties for Board members of Oregon public universities, including the duty of care, which does not satisfy itself in four days on a plan whose author has stated wholesale revisions will not be possible;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Faculty Senate requests that the SOU Board of Trustees defer the May 8, 2026 vote thirty (30) days on procedural and fiduciary grounds; and that any subsequent vote on the Deloitte plan be scheduled with a 30-day deliberation window;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Faculty Senate requests that President Bailey, before the May 8, 2026 Board vote, personally certify in writing:

- (1) that the Employee Salary Listings for FY2015 through FY2025 are accurate as published;
- (2) that the identified allocation errors (differential tuition, course fees, non-faculty salaries, S&S expenses, ETFS restrictions, indirect cost recovery, and missing or incorrect data) have been corrected in the Deloitte program-level analysis and that those corrections have been documented in writing;
- (3) that any administrative positions, compensation, supplemental payments, or program-level revenue or expense items not reflected in the published or presented data have been fully disclosed; and
- (4) that the institution’s current Workday, Adaptive, and reporting systems can produce timely, accurate program-level financial reporting on demand; and
- (5) that the President and the holders of senior administrative positions have made the outside professional activity disclosures applicable to faculty under SOU policy and the APSOU CBA;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Faculty Senate requests that the SOU Board of Trustees commission an independent external audit of the institutional record of plan-and-cut cycles, the pattern of administrative growth, the financial picture presented to the Board across the period (January 2022 through present), and the disclosure timing of all material financial information including the August 2025 Employee Retention Credit, conducted by an auditor approved by the Faculty Senate, and not having a current consulting engagement with SOU, with the audit’s scope to include the minutes and decisions of the Project Team formed in March 2026; and that no further restructuring vote proceed before this audit is complete.

Resolution 3 — On the Exigency Declaration; Administrative-to-Faculty Headcount and Financial Ratios

WHEREAS, the financial exigency declared on August 4, 2025, has been used as the justification for terminating tenured faculty positions and eliminating academic programs;

WHEREAS, the public financial record shows that during the period FY2022 to FY2024, while 29 full-time faculty positions were eliminated, 14 administrative positions were added, and the eight-year-stable administrator-to-faculty ratio of approximately 1.18 grew to 1.605;

WHEREAS, HECC's January 2026 report identified Southern Oregon University as the most extreme case of administrative expansion in the Oregon system;

WHEREAS, Article 11 of the APSOU Collective Bargaining Agreement permits financial exigency *only when* a severe financial crisis cannot be alleviated by less drastic means than termination of tenured appointments, and administrative reduction is the less drastic means available and not pursued;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Faculty Senate requests that the SOU Board of Trustees impose an administrative hiring freeze for the duration of the declared exigency period; that any further academic program elimination be matched by a proportional administrative reduction sufficient to restore the FY2022 administrator-to-faculty ratio of approximately 1.18 before further academic restructuring is implemented; and that the Board commission an independent external review of administrative compensation and headcount growth FY2015 through FY2025.

Written Public Comment

Southern Oregon University
Special Meeting of the Board of Trustees Listening Session
May 5, 2026

Written Public Comments Submitted as of May 1, 2026

5/2/2026 14:24:25

Hayden Johnson- Current Student

saving GSWS program

Written Public Comment

I am a trans and queer student here at SOU. For me, the queer friendly environment at SOU was one of the main draws of this school for me, and that includes the GSWS program. For a school that prides itself on being accepting and supportive of different identities, maintaining this program is incredibly important. The GSWS program is doing important work in fields like sociology, history, sciences, etc., and I can personally attest to that as someone who has taken many classes in the program for my minor. Additionally, keeping this program makes it clear to students that this really is a safe and supportive environment, which speaks more than any surface-level acceptance that many other schools have shown. This is a particularly scary and unprecedented time in our country, and I think it is crucial for students to really feel safe and valued, which is exactly what this program has done for me. Personally, the GSWS program specifically was a large part of the reason I chose SOU in the first place, and if it were to be cut or removed, I can't say I would be interested in staying here in the future, and I know many of my fellow students and peers feel similarly. The faculty in this program have also been especially helpful for me, providing great advising, teaching, and mentorship for me and many others, and they are by far the faculty who have had the biggest positive impact on me in my time here. Not only is the GSWS program necessary in terms of its impact on education and inclusivity at our school, but I also believe it would be a huge financial loss for the school in the long run, with less and less queer students (which is a lot!) choosing SOU for its accepting environment and diverse educational programs.

5/4/2026 13:18:17

Kylan de Vries - Current Faculty

GSWS, regional and mission alignment, and our LGBTQ students.

Written Public Comment

Written Public Comment Continued.

"The GSWS program, which is celebrating its 45th year at SOU, has always been interdisciplinary, drawing courses from a variety of programs and faculty across campus. With the hiring of faculty member, Dr. Carey Jean Sojka, the program was able to build on expertise and create the following.

- 1) A stronger GSWS minor that signals, particularly to our LGBTQ+ students (about 30% of our current student population) that SOU is a welcoming space.
- 2) A Transgender Studies certificate (the first of its kind in the nation, drawing national attention).
- 3) A Trans and Queer Training program (more below). A program providing paid trainings to organizations and businesses in our local community.
- 4) A GSWS major (now being sunset, even before the Deloitte report) that helped retain students who were leaving SOU to obtain that degree at other institutions.

The data used to assess GSWS did not take into consideration 2 academic years of protected parental leave and sabbaticals, where the program could not be supported by SOU to hire adjuncts, and so SCH was negatively affected. Enrollment since then has gone up.

WHAT ARE THE COSTS?

- a) Signals to our students (30% who identify as LGBTQ+) that SOU is not a place of belonging or love for them. Especially with the elimination of the Office of EDI last summer, the elimination of the GSWS major last summer, and the merging of what used to be the Queer Resource Center, Multicultural Resource Center, and Women's Resource Center into the Office of Belonging and Engagement. This means enrollment in other programs will be affected.
- b) GSWS was a big contributor to General Education, those courses will be lost.
- c) Ends the Adult Learning education, that was benefitting regional organizations, that had been historically part of the GSWS program - through the TQT program.

MEETING THE NEEDS OF OUR REGION

Deloitte outlines the importance of engaging "Adult Learners", and GSWS has done this through the TQT (Trans and Queer Training) program. Dr. Carey Jean Sojka created TQT with a focus on LGBTQIA+ organizational education and professional development, but many other topics were also requested and provided on both general and specific topics. Organizations already served include:

AllCare

Children's

Advocacy Coalition

ColumbiaCare

Coos Bay Public Library

Written Public Comment Continued.

Hearts with a Mission
Jackson County Library District
Jackson County Mental Health
Jackson County Sexual Assault Response Team
Jackson County Sheriff's Office
Klamath Basin Behavioral Health
La Clinica
Meaningful Care Conference
Oregon Department of Human Services District 8
Oregon Department of Human Services Statewide
Oregon Juvenile Department Directors Association
Oregon Resource Association
Nonprofit Association of Oregon
Planned Parenthood of Southwestern Oregon
Progressive Oregon Women (POW!)
Rogue Action Center
Willow Wind Community Learning Center

SOU struggled to provide institutional support to this program, in part because it did not fit the traditional undergraduate model of delivery. With Dr. Sojka's sabbatical and parental leave, the program was not sustained by SOU. Dr. Sojka is working to bring it back next academic year, as this program clearly meets a need in our region.

EDI MISSION ALIGNMENT - LGBT2SQIA+ STUDENTS

According to President Bailey, currently ~30% of SOU's student body identifies as LGBT2SQIA+, and SOU has ranked high on the Pride index, because of our programming, which draws new students. States are becoming increasingly hostile and deadly to LGBT2SQIA+ youth and adults. This is a map of the current situation for LGBT2SQIA+ individuals by state - <https://www.lgbtmap.org/equality-maps>

Oregon is one of the safer states in the USA, and is likely to maintain its legal protections for LGBT2SQIA+ people. The UCLA Williams Institute has noted that Oregon has a higher percentage of LGBT2SQIA+ people than other states, and Dr. Miriam Abelson (PSU) is researching the current trend of LGBT2SQIA+ people migrating to Oregon in the wake of hostilities. In addition, many LGBT2SQIA+ students from other states are interested in SOU specifically because it is in a rural location and resonates with areas they grew up.

The GSWS program services as a lighthouse, signalling to these students that SOU and our region are welcoming.

REGIONAL EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Story #1

GSWS has an important role in preparing students for health-related fields through experiential learning. In the GSWS course LGBTQIA+ Health, Dr. Sojka's class collaborated with AllCare Health. Students created a survey for AllCare Health to distribute to regional health providers about provider awareness of and competencies in providing health services to LGBTQIA+ communities. As one student stated, "This class was monumental in how I was exposed to truly making a difference in health care for the LGBTQ+ community." One of our alums, Jay Lundy, shared the following about their GSWS degree and current work related to health: "I have used what I learned from [Dr. Sojka] and GSWS, as a whole, constantly in my life since graduating SOU. I am currently a program assistant of the Oregon Office on Disability and Health at OHSU, part of a CDC grant-funded project across ten states. My work focuses on health equity for Oregonians with disabilities. I support a team of coworkers who help connect Oregonians, especially those in rural areas like Southern Oregon where we began this work, to preventive healthcare. I wouldn't have had the skills and knowledge to do this job, which has been so fulfilling and impactful to me, without Dr. Sojka. She has been a mentor figure for me since I was at SOU." These experiential, community-based learning opportunities provide students with essential skills in a diverse social world.

Story #2

Many GSWS courses led by Dr. Carey Jean Sojka include an aspect where students practice what they are reading and learning in the classroom while working with local community organizations. In Violence Prevention (GSWS 210) this Spring term, students are shadowing Jackson County Sexual Assault Response Team (JC SART) on their work providing sex education in the Ashland and Central Point School Districts. Students are also choosing between completing a training through which they will become certified to do crisis intervention work as a volunteer for Community Works, and co-organizing an item drive for survivors of violence who work with Community Works. Guest speakers from each of these organizations are joining the class, and students have the opportunity to connect with their work outside of the classroom, directly learning from these organizations and local leaders and preparing to work in these areas after graduation. Students from a wide variety of disciplines across campus are in this class this term, particularly those who envision their future work incorporating violence prevention, sexual assault prevention, and intimate partner violence prevention and response (including many Criminology, Psychology, and Human Services majors and more).

Written Public Comment Continued.

"

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Kylan de Vries - Current Faculty

[REDACTED]

Sociology and Anthropology

Written Public Comment

"How will SOU and the HECC use this information to make decisions about academic offerings, considering financial sustainability, meeting the needs of our region, and aligning with SOU's mission while paying attention to the consequences and ripple effects of eliminating certain programs to those regional needs and mission alignment?"

The faculty in Sociology and Anthropology (SOAN) coordinate not just the Sociology and Anthropology program but the following, directly meeting the needs of our students and our local region. This work is not captured by SCH/faculty salary.

HUMAN SERVICES – prepares undergraduate students to become human service professionals with a broad and deep understanding of human behavior, society, and social justice from both a psychological and sociological perspective. This is particularly meeting a need with non-traditional learners in the greater region.

HEALTHCARE ADMINISTRATION – prepares students for occupations in healthcare administrative and ancillary services which require a competitive education level of a bachelor's degree, with concentrations in Aging, Data Analytics, Healthcare Personnel Management, and Population, Public, and Community Health.

Gender, Sexuality, & Women's Studies (this is co-coordinated with a faculty member in GSWS).

While faculty teach in these three programs above, and thus SCH may be accounted for, their course releases to support, coordinate, and maintain community connections in these programs and facilitate the development and students engagement, is not addressed.

In addition, SOAN faculty teach courses designed to support other programs who do not have that faculty expertise in those areas. For example, SOAN faculty contribute social science content to Environmental Science, Policy, and Sustainability (which is mission

Written Public Comment Continued.

critical, as a campus focusing on sustainability), Masters in Business Administration, and Military Sciences, enhancing those academic programs.

Finally, SOAN faculty have developed strong connections with various local organizations, and provide students with valuable experiential learning for their careers. Here are some examples of SOAN faculty and student partners:

Asante Rogue Regional Medical Center
Ashland City Council committee
Ashland Community Wildfire Plan
Ashland Liveable Alliance
Ashland Supportive Housing
Boys and Girls Club of Talent
Bureau of Land Management
Community Works
Continuum Behavioral Health & Recovery Services
Fire District 3
Hearts with a Mission
HIV Alliance
Jackson Care Connect
Jackson County Fuel Committee
Jackson County Library Services
Josephine County Juvenile Department
Judy's Midnight Diner
Kids Unlimited
La Clinica
Lithia Motors
Local Tribal governments, such as the Coquille Indian Tribe
Maslow Project
Mercy Flights
National Park Service
North Medford Highschool
Northwest Seasonal Workers Association
OHSU
OnTrack Rogue Valley
Phoenix Counseling Center
Providence
Rogue Action Center
Rogue Climate
Rogue Community College
Rogue Community Health

Written Public Comment Continued.

Rogue Food Unites
Rogue Valley Food Systems Network
Rogue Workforce Partnership
Signet Health
Southern Oregon Historical Society
Stabbin' Wagon
UNETE Oregon
Valley Immediate Care
Veteran Affairs

SOAN GRADUATES SERVE REGIONAL NEEDS, HERE ARE WHERE SOME OF OUR GRADUATES WORK:

- Education Coordinator, Ashland Food Coop
- Healthcare Receptionist, Planned Parenthood
- Highschool Teacher, North Medford High School
- Resource Specialist, Jackson County Libraries
- Acquisitions & Resource Access Specialist, Hannon Library, SOU
- Community Organizer, Rogue Climate
- Supportive Housing Associate, ColumbiaCare Services
- Case Manager, Options for Southern Oregon
- Community Outreach Manager, Ashland Supportive Housing
- Admissions Counselor, SOU
- Social Services Specialist, Oregon Department of Human Services
- Mental Health Associate, ColumbiaCare Services
- Case Manager, ACCESS
- Program Coordinator, SOU Latino/a/x Outreach & Support
- Audience and Business Services Coordinator, Jefferson Public Radio
- Attorney, Southern Oregon Public Defender
- Outpatient Case Manager, ColumbiaCare Services
- Office Manager, Ashland High School
- Mental Health Counselor, Options for Southern Oregon
- Equity Coalition Director, SO Health-E
- Technician, Bureau of Land Management (Medford office)
- Coordinator, Jackson County Community Justice Transition Center
- CEO, Jackson Care Connect
- Executive Director, Jackson Soil and Water Conservation District
- Development Coordinator, Rogue Climate
- Policy Strategist, SO Health-E

Written Public Comment Continued.

If this kind of flexibility and sharing of faculty resources across the university penalizes some departments by presenting them as losing income, the impact is not just to those departments, but also in the negative signal it sends to remaining programs about the pitfalls of cooperative, cross-departmental initiatives. Metrics that encourage siloing of departments will not lead to a nimble, flexible, smaller university that can be sustainable into the future.

"

[REDACTED]

Gage Skaggs - Current Student

Library concerns and support for the plan
Written Public Comment

"Hello! First off, thank you to the board. While this meeting is not a happy one for any stakeholder, it is your seat I envy the least at the moment. I'm writing to support the plan, ask for more consideration for the Hannon Library, and recommend community use of the rec center.

First, I'm a MAT student and a local teacher at SMHS. I think a lot of this plan makes a lot of sense. It is not a happy decision, but I support the slimming of degree offerings, and the decision to focus resources on higher head count majors and local job-market demand. I teach Seniors at South, and the clear focus / future identity makes me a lot more confident in recommending my students to SOU if they're pursuing a career in Business, Education, or Psychology.

Second, I worked at Hannon Library throughout my undergrad years, and think the data presented on gate count could be misguided. In my experience, the gate count has been halved potentially by a Hannon Library decision during the pandemic to ramp up digital scans of documents per student request. The digital scans of requested materials is a benefit: it will reduce in-person foot traffic but continues to support SOU students, perhaps better than in-person foot traffic could. I'm just curious if the gate-count numbers reflect digital requests. If not, can we include those to better represent student use of Hannon Library?

Lastly, I'm an idiot, but offering Ashland locals use of the new recreation center seems like an opportunity worth considering. It's a fantastic but costly facility. An earlier draft of the plan included reducing staff there, but I don't see that reflected in the current plan. Local memberships could be a small, but helpful, step towards financial sustainability. Currently, non-affiliated community members can only purchase a \$10 day pass. Term-long or annual memberships would make it more competitive.

Written Public Comment Continued.

Thanks for your time!"

5/4/2026 17:14:53

Daniel Scotton - Community Member

Public Higher Education Beyond Workforce Alignment

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=11AWTBjdGrku03lpe0G6xUc6rQ4XhBTKZ>

Written Public Comment

"Dear Chair Clough, Vice-Chair Shelby, and Members of the Board of Trustees,

I submit this comment recognizing that Southern Oregon University faces real structural pressures, and that decisions made now will shape its trajectory for decades to come. However, the rationale presented in Deloitte's analysis reflects a particular, and contestable, understanding of the university's purpose. The report consistently frames Southern Oregon University's challenges as a failure to adequately respond to employer-defined needs, privileging labor market alignment as the central metric of institutional success. This framing does not simply diagnose a problem; it advances a model. One in which the public university is increasingly understood as a workforce development mechanism, oriented toward optimizing labor supply in response to external demand signals.

While workforce preparation is a legitimate and necessary function of public higher education, it is not an exhaustive one. When elevated to a primary organizing principle, it risks narrowing the institution's role. Subordinating its contributions to civic development, cultural life, critical inquiry and regional resilience to the shifting demands of the labor market. The question, then, is not whether universities should prepare students for work—they should. The question is whether that function should define the institution. This comment argues that it should not.

Public education in the United States has never served a singular purpose. From its earliest formations, it has operated at the intersection of multiple—and often competing—aims: preparing individuals for economic participation, cultivating civic knowledge, expanding access to social mobility, and sustaining a shared cultural and intellectual life. This multiplicity is not incidental, it reflects a longstanding tension within public education itself. On one side is the view that education is a public good, essential to the functioning of a democratic society and the development of informed, capable citizens. On the other is the view that education should be oriented toward

Written Public Comment Continued.

economic productivity, serving as a mechanism to prepare individuals for participation in the labor market.

These perspectives have never fully displaced one another. Instead, they are in tension with each other. Public institutions have historically operated as negotiators between them, balancing civic and economic functions in response to shifting political and social conditions. The current emphasis on workforce alignment, as reflected in Deloitte's analysis, should be understood within this broader context. It is not a neutral or inevitable development, but a continuation—and an intensification—of the economic framing of education. Recognizing this history makes clear that alternative models remain not only possible but necessary to consider.

This employer-centered orientation matters because it determines which voices appear institutionally legible and which forms of value fall outside the frame. Students are frequently positioned in relation to their future economic function, while employers are elevated as primary stakeholders whose feedback should guide institutional direction. This is not merely a matter of emphasis, but of orientation. By centering employer demands as a primary input, the report adopts a model in which the value of the university is measured through its responsiveness to labor market signals. In this framework, educational outcomes are implicitly evaluated based on their alignment with workforce needs, rather than their contribution to broader forms of individual or collective development. The language used throughout the analysis reinforces this orientation. Terms associated with workforce readiness, talent pipelines, and market alignment are foregrounded, while the university's role in cultivating critical reasoning, civic engagement, and cultural life are comparatively absent or secondary. This asymmetry is significant. What is measured, emphasized, and operationalized ultimately defines institutional priorities.

The effect of this framing is to privilege a narrow set of stakeholders and outcomes, while rendering others less visible or less legible within the decision-making process. Students, in particular, risk being understood primarily as future labor inputs rather than as participants in a broader educational and civic project. This is not to suggest that employer engagement is inappropriate. It is to recognize that when such engagement becomes the dominant lens through which institutional value is assessed, it reshapes the university itself—subtly but materially—toward a more limited conception of its purpose.

Workforce preparation is an essential function of public higher education. Universities play a critical role in equipping students with the skills, knowledge, critical reasoning, and experiences necessary to participate in the economy, and any serious institutional

Written Public Comment Continued.

strategy must account for this responsibility. However, workforce alignment is a necessary condition of institutional success, not a sufficient one. When treated as a primary organizing principle, it introduces a form of short-termism that privileges immediate labor market demands over the longer-term capacities that universities are uniquely positioned to cultivate. Labor markets are inherently dynamic, shaped by technological change, economic cycles, and shifting industry needs. An institutional model overly calibrated to industrial demand risks constant reactive adjustment, rather than the development of durable, intellectual, and adaptive capacities that persist across such changes.

Moreover, many of the university's most significant contributions are not easily captured through workforce metrics. The cultivation of critical reasoning, ethical judgment, civic participation, and cultural understanding are foundational to both individual flourishing and societal resilience, yet remain largely invisible within a framework centered on employment outcomes. Some may argue that programs without a clear pathway between educational attainment and labor-market demand represent inefficiencies within a public institution. This view, however, rests on a narrow understanding of value in public systems. Not all public institutions, or the programs within them, exist to generate measurable economic return. Many exist to provide services that are essential, but not easily quantified.

The United States Postal Service offers a useful parallel. Its purpose is not to maximize profit, but to ensure universal access to communication infrastructure. Debates about its "efficiency" often miss this foundational role. The same logic applies to public higher education. The presence of programs that do not map cleanly onto immediate labor demand is not a failure of the system, it is a reflection of its broader social mandate. Efficiency, in this context, is not synonymous with value. A public institution is not obligated to abandon forms of intellectual development simply because they resist quantification. To do so would be to redefine the institution according to the limits of the metrics used to evaluate it.

A narrow focus on employability also risks redefining the student experience itself. Education becomes instrumentalized, valued primarily for its economic return, rather than understood as a formative process that prepares individuals not only for work, but for participating in a complex social, political, and cultural world. The issue, then, is not whether universities should engage with workforce needs, but whether those needs should define the boundaries of institutional purpose. A model that elevates workforce alignment above all else risks constraining the very capacities that make higher education valuable in the first place.

Written Public Comment Continued.

As a regional public university, SOU occupies a role that extends beyond workforce preparation. It functions as an intellectual anchor within the region—contributing to the development of informed citizens, supporting local cultural life, and strengthening the social and institutional fabric of Southern Oregon. This role is particularly significant in regions that are geographically distant from major metropolitan centers, where public institutions often serve as primary sites of cultural production and civic engagement opportunities. In such contexts, the university's value cannot be reduced to its ability to supply labor to existing industries. Programs and initiatives that do not map cleanly onto immediate labor market demand may be deprioritized, despite their importance to the region's long-term vitality. The result is not simply a shift in institutional focus, but a redefinition of what the university is for. This narrowing has downstream effects. The erosion of disciplines and programs that cultivate critical thinking and cultural engagement diminishes the university's capacity to contribute to a resilient and adaptive regional community. Over time, this can weaken the very conditions that make economic and social systems sustainable. A regional university does not only respond to the needs of its surrounding economy, it helps shape the character of the region itself.

Public higher education is best understood as a public good with workforce relevance, not as a system defined by workforce outcomes alone. These functions are not mutually exclusive, nor are they equivocal, the distance in their relationship must be carefully maintained. A university that fulfills its broader public mission, cultivating critical thinking, civic engagement, and intellectual adaptability, is, in the long run, better positioned to support a dynamic and evolving economy. The capacities developed through a broad-based education are precisely those that enable individuals to navigate shifting labor markets, rather than simply respond to their current demands.

In this sense, workforce preparedness is most effective when it is embedded within a wider institutional framework that prioritizes human development and societal contribution. When decoupled from this broader mission, it risks becoming narrowly reactive, tied to present conditions rather than future possibilities. The challenge for institutions like SOU is not to choose between serving the public good and supporting regional workforce needs, but to resist collapsing one into the other. A balanced approach recognizes that the long-term health of both the economy and the region depends on an educational model that extends beyond immediate labor market alignment.

Maintaining this balance requires frameworks of evaluation that are capable of recognizing multiple forms of value. When employment outcomes become the dominant measure, they begin to define what the institution is allowed to value. Reaffirming the

Written Public Comment Continued.

university's role as a public good does not diminish its economic relevance, it secures it within a more durable and expansive foundation.

The challenges facing Southern Oregon University are real, and the need for strategic clarity is undeniable. However, the frameworks used to diagnose these challenges will shape not only the solutions pursued, but the institution that emerges from them. The analysis presented by Deloitte reflects a broader shift toward market-centered definitions of value in public higher education—one that, if adopted uncritically, risks narrowing the university's purpose to that of a workforce development pipeline. This comment has argued that such a narrowing is neither necessary nor desirable. Public universities have long operated at the intersection of economic, civic, and cultural responsibilities, and their enduring value lies precisely in their ability to hold these functions in balance. For a regional institution like SOU, this balance is especially critical. To narrow SOU's purpose is to narrow one of the region's few institutions capable of producing civic capacity, cultural continuity, and long-term adaptability. The question is not whether the university should respond to the needs of the labor market, but whether those needs should define its mission. A more durable framework begins by recognizing that economic usefulness is one outcome of a healthy public university—not the measure of its entire purpose.

As decisions are made about the institution's future, maintaining this broader understanding of value will be essential to ensuring that Southern Oregon University continues to serve not only the economy, but the region and society as a whole."

5/4/2026 18:49:42

[REDACTED]

Paulette Avery - Community Member

[REDACTED]

Sustainability plan

Written Public Comment

"I am writing as a community member and also as the president of the fundraising arm of the Medford Branch of the American Association of University Women. Our branch has raised funds and provided scholarships to SOU students for many years and hopes to continue to do so.

I am aware that hard decisions must be made in order for SOU to survive but I am also very concerned that as so often happens, the arts will be cut in favor of other departments. I am sure as trustees you are very aware of the importance of the arts in

Written Public Comment Continued.

the Rogue Valley. The drama department was eliminated several years ago and now the music department is threatened with closing. I know two members of the music faculty and have heard that some of the criteria used by Deloitte to make the decision about the music department are inaccurate or outdated. Having just heard President Bailey ask that everyone come from a place of love, I am coming from a place of loving music. I also know personally two of the music faculty and several students and love them. And I have enjoyed the excellence of the music produced by the department. I urge you to do whatever you can to save the music at SOU. Thank you."

5/4/2026 19:31:16

[REDACTED]

Linda Weeks - Current Student

Support of music program

Written Public Comment

I already commented, but I wanted to add one final thing: rather than cutting the music program, I did the math, and it really wouldn't take much more of a "performing arts supplement" to make the music program sustainable. Much better to keep the music program and not to have to write off the investments that have already been made in the music department! And it would keep enrollment up!

5/4/2026 21:41:48

[REDACTED]

Findley Howard - Current Student

[REDACTED]

Comments on the SOU community and board of trustees reaction to the Deloitte proposal.

Written Public Comment

"The main things that I have to comment on are the responses I have seen to Deloitte's proposal from the SOU community, like staff and my fellow students, as well as the Board of Trustees. To be brief, I am much more afraid of the effect of the community's overarching denial and opposition to the cuts proposed than I am of the cuts themselves. Behavior I have seen from students across campus, as well as reactions I

Written Public Comment Continued.

witnessed last week from the Board of Trustees in the plan preview meeting worry me a lot. This is because both parties seem more inclined to talk in circles about how we 'can't' make changes because they're going to inevitably affect someone somewhere, rather than accept and solve the difficult reality at hand.

It's obvious to everyone involved that the situation SOU finds itself in is not ideal. Due to this, any reasonable solution cannot possibly be ideal either. It needs to be recognized, however, that while some students and staff will be negatively affected by the changes, that everyone involved with SOU will be affected if the university shuts down.

As far as the reaction of students goes, as a student it has been very frustrating to watch. Despite what rumor says, Deloitte does not have any skin in the game and they don't have a vendetta against certain programs. They're doing their job and offering recommendations that are necessary to keep the school open. I understand that Deloitte's findings have been jarring and scary for a lot of people, including myself, but the facts that Deloitte are pointing out cannot be dismissed as fake or AI simply because they aren't what people want to hear. Additionally, outright denying Deloitte's report does absolutely nothing to actually solve the problem at hand and instead only contributes to an even worse alternative, that every major and job is cut because SOU is defunct.

With all this being said, I don't believe that making major cuts like these is an endlessly sustainable solution to the problems SOU and other schools are facing. Every university can't perpetually shrink into a glorified and more expensive community college, and they shouldn't have to in the first place. The bigger picture involves a state that refuses to fund education adequately and a federal government that is actively working against education itself. The state in particular is who I believe the SOU community's outrage and outreach efforts should be directed towards, instead of Deloitte who are simply reporting the facts and the SOU administration who are simply trying to react to said facts.

The best thing I believe that SOU and the Board of Trustees can do is realize that survival of SOU should be the priority and that survival is going to require many difficult adjustments. Those adjustments must be made, however, because SOU cannot afford to structure itself for exceptions from the rule, 'what-ifs', and other uncertainties. The only certain thing right now is that SOU is facing a crisis that we have very fortunately been given a chance to solve. As a dedicated student, I urge the Board to not waste this opportunity just because they're afraid of change. I personally am far more afraid of not having SOU at all than I am of having to adjust to a new version of it. "

Written Public Comment Continued.

5/4/2026 22:14:44

Ash Bowman - Current Student

The Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies program
Written Public Comment

"Hello, my name is Ash Bowman. I am 18 years old, I am a Theatre major and a Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies minor. And from August 2021 to my graduation on June 13th, 2025, I fought tooth and nail for my run-down, conservative high school to keep its theatre program running. Chester, California hadn't been kind to its artists from the start. We're a construction town, a logging town, and we generally didn't ""need"" to have the arts. My first taste of theatre had been with my former Vice Principal, though at-the-time 3rd grade teacher Meghan Orange when I was in 5th grade. I knew it was what I wanted to do for the rest of my life. Then the pandemic happened when I was in 7th grade. Where, mid-psychotic episode due to a rapid onset of schizophrenia, I found this very university. I latched on, I didn't let go. Not once did I let go. You had a good theatre program. What more could I ask?

But Chester hated the arts. So, I had to make sure the arts were sustained. Because maybe, if I got enough experience, I could do the cool stuff you do. I was still screwed over come freshman year, I only showed up in-person for theatre with everything else being online for me. In sophomore year, I tried very hard to build something. I failed. Then came junior year. A new English teacher came along. He was interested in reviving the drama program. Once again, I latched onto a dream.

There were, I believe, 9 of us by the time I graduated. With only about 100 students in the middle and high school combined, that was a feat. The program still died after my graduation. I wouldn't be surprised if my time there was the last time Chester Junior/Senior High School saw theatre in its halls. And now, you're probably asking why this is at all relevant to GSWS.

I told you all of that because the GSWS program is to its majors, minors, and certificate-workers that that drama program was to me. It's something small. So very small, and it's probably considered easy cutaway to you. But GSWS is loved. What would a psychology major be without understanding beyond the average? What about

Written Public Comment Continued.

history and literature majors, where so frequently, subjects like women and queer people get swept under the rug? Do business majors need to lack the depth of minority? Can an actor like me understand how to live the life of a character who doesn't align with my own life? Could I have played a demented man, or 3 different New Yorkers, or a stressed stage manager, had I not learned to understand them?

Merge it alongside SOAN and E&RS if you must. GSWS is cherished, regardless of the numbers Deloitte may throw at you."

5/5/2026 9:08:17

Carol Cohen - Community Member

Objection to recommendation to sunset the Music Academic Unit

https://drive.google.com/open?id=1Iae0AfVjnIhK6TeZSfFN_fwIFvgErI_0

Written Public Comment

Objection to recommendation to sunset the Music Academic Unit - remarks on value of the Music program to the community and to the student body and options for fiscal sustainability for the Music program. The Music program (and similarly, the Creative Writing Program) is an integral part of the liberal arts education and should be treated at least on an equal footing as the other liberal arts programs including Theatre, Art/Art History/English Studies, etc.

"I write as a community member in response to Deloitte's report presented on May 4, 2026. I am writing in objection to the recommendation to sunset the Music academic unit (AU), and secondarily, the Creative Writing AU. I believe:

- The Deloitte report did not give adequate consideration of the importance of the Music AU to the community (including the student community), and
- There are viable alternative solutions that would allow the Music AU to continue as an important part of SOU.

Importance of the Music AU to the Community

To begin, I noted that Deloitte stated toward the beginning of the presentation that SOU is known for its liberal arts programs. And while Theatre, Art & Art History, and related liberal arts specialties (e.g., English studies, media, cinema, and digital arts)

Written Public Comment Continued.

are recommended for continuation, Music and Creative Writing are not. I would argue that Music as well as Creative Writing are “part and parcel” – essential aspects – of the liberal arts and thus, should not be treated differently than the other liberal arts AUs.

Deloitte’s report lists Reciprocal Community Benefits as one of SOU’s Core Strengths, noting “SOU serves the region and is cited as a reason for residents to move to the area” (slide 13). (Indeed, I and my family moved to the area recently with SOU’s presence being one factor in our decision). Yet the methodology and decision criteria stated for the recommendation to sunset the Music and Creative Writing programs (along with Gender, Sexuality, & Women's Studies, and International Studies) appears to focus largely on financial margins and to neglect the substantial community benefits. As noted on slide 35, “Academic units were assessed based on financial margins (total operational expenses compared to total operating revenues), student demand, program scale, and overlap with other offerings.” The slide says nothing about consideration of community benefit from these programs.

However, it is obvious that the community directly benefits from the Music program in multiple ways:

- Opportunities to attend concerts, operas, chamber music performances, and other musical experiences;
- Direct participation in university music groups and performances (for example, community members are invited to rehearse or perform with students for some events, community musicians are recruited to support opera and choral performances);
- Providing a venue and audience for non-university groups to perform or share educational music experiences for the community using SOU’s concert hall and other music facilities; and
- Sharing the SOU faculty’s notable talent and expertise with the community in other roles. As just one example, the director of SOU’s choral/voice program also serves the community by conducting the Rogue Valley Chorale, an independent chorus of community members.

Further, the report does not consider how retaining SOU’s Theatre program but losing its Music program would weaken the stand-out Theatre program as well as be a loss to the larger student body. Theater and music go hand-in-hand, such as in musical theater, opera, and in the role of music in plays and films. For example, why would theater students attend a university without a music program program, thereby losing the opportunity to study musical theater—which is a big part of theater? Why assume that students interested in theater would not also be interested in music? It is likely that eliminating the Music program would cause SOU to lose Theatre majors as an unintended consequence.

Written Public Comment Continued.

In addition, the benefits of the Music AU to SOU's students are not confined to music majors, because not all of the SOU students participating in its music programs are music majors. Like athletics, for example, the Music programs provide a vital outlet for the student community at large to participate in or partake of its offerings. Thus, Deloitte has likely underestimated "student demand, program scale, and overlap with other offerings" in its analysis by focusing on the number of music majors.

Finally, without even considering the benefits to the community and to students, it does not make sense that 8 of the 9 AUs recommended to be reconfigured, i.e., continued but with restructuring, have fewer numbers of majoring students than the Music and Creative Writing AUs, which are recommended to be closed with no opportunity for changes (slides 31, 35, and 36). These recommendations do not reflect student demand as Deloitte purports they do.

Alternative Solutions for Sustaining the Music AU

I see several viable options for sustaining the Music AU, building on the report's pathways presented for other AUs. These are 1) making targeted choices for fiscal sustainability and 2) fund-raising.

Targeted Choices for Fiscal Sustainability

As the Deloitte presenters noted with respect to the Auxiliary Units, not every university activity should be "forced into breaking even." Deloitte appears to be more generous in its analysis of options for Auxiliary Units than for Academic Units by presenting the possibility of intentional cross-subsidization. In this vein, some amount of cross-subsidization could be considered for the Music AU, especially due to the substantial community benefits discussed above.

Like the other AUs slated for optimization (slide 34), the Music AU should also be offered the opportunity to analyze its budget and propose areas for cost-cutting or other optimization to make it more financially sustainable. The report did not present any fiscal analysis of AUs below the overall levels of operating expenses and operating revenues to arrive at its three-way categorization of recommendations for Optimization, Sunsetting, or Reconfiguration of programs. It would be important to consider for the Music AU, as for any other AU, what elements of its budget could be curtailed or revenues enhanced to bring the overall expenditures and revenues into better balance. A simple example is raising additional revenue by charging more for use of the concert hall, which I have observed is in near-constant use (reflecting high demand that may be maintained even if fees are raised). After such targeted cuts or rebalancing, the Music

Written Public Comment Continued.

AU may have no higher or lower a margin than other programs as a starting point for any across-the-board cuts such as personnel raises or benefits.

Fund-raising

As the Deloitte representatives emphasized toward the end of their presentation, “support for SOU clearly exists.” In fact, given the unique attributes of Ashland’s population—including relatively high levels of education, income, support for the arts, and volunteerism/activism—I suspect the degree of support for our university is probably extraordinary compared to other communities. As such, Deloitte’s assumptions about the amount of philanthropic support that can be raised and the speed in which it can be raised may be underestimated. This may be especially true for SOU’s Music programs, given the high level of community benefits from music programs and support for the arts.

It is worth considering among the sustainability options for SOU, and for the Music AU in particular, that philanthropic efforts may yield far greater returns than expected and that there may be a community willingness to work to raise these funds quickly. There may even be support for a campaign at the state level to raise additional public funds for the university, especially based on the question of whether Oregon’s ranking of 46 among the states on higher education funding per student is where it wants to be. I, for one, would eagerly volunteer to participate in such philanthropic or public fund-raising campaigns.

"

5/5/2026 9:16:48

[REDACTED]

Stephen Lanning - Current Staff

[REDACTED]

Accountability Not Cuts https://drive.google.com/open?id=1Rj27rLJpD-iT30irZ51Rtur-I_DcwXX9

Written Public Comment

"We need to hold our state accountable for years of underfunding higher education. The HECC has gone from a staff FTE of 150-160 in biennium 2021-2023 and an operating budget of \$75 million to 187.7 FTE and \$95.3 million operating budget (2025-2027 biennium) which are both higher than the entire budget of SOU which has a far greater

Written Public Comment Continued.

number of employees and student population. With enrollment declining, why is the HECC budget not also contracting like they are suggesting for our public universities!?!? The hypocrisy at the state to not rein in these costs is criminal!

The Deloitte plan suggests shared services and operations, which was just what the HECC approved dismantling when it approved the dissolution OUS system in 2015. This came at enormous cost and strain on the regional public universities like SOU. And now they are asking us to go ""Back to the Future"" without holding themselves accountable for the mistake they made over a decade ago? That is absolutely shameful!

On top of that, our State funds higher education at an atrocious rate of 46th in the nation. It funds community colleges at 15th in the nation. If the state even moved the needle to 36th in the nation, we wouldn't be in this position, although we would have to address the demographic slope. If we funded it the same as community colleges we would likely be good for quite some time.

At the same time as funding our community colleges at a much higher rate, our legislature is undermining 4 year public universities by allowing community colleges to offer 4 year degrees in nursing and education with potential degrees in business and other areas likely not far behind. Are they intentionally trying to close our regional universities by pitting the community colleges in direct competition? These changes, along with the funding differences between community colleges and our 4 year public universities is just mind boggling.

The HECC bloat and lack of accountability at the state will result in the loss of jobs that will hurt not only those affected, but the greater community of Ashland. Every loss of an employee or student who is not coming to work or study at the university will affect Ashland businesses at a critical time when economic pressures from inflation, tariffs, etc. are already having downward pressures. The ones that won't hurt are the HECC employees, top bureaucrats, lawyers and consultants, but the ones that are going to feel the effects are the students, the groundskeepers, the faculty, the custodians and the small businesses and service workers of our community - especially those that rely on the business coming from SOU.

If our Board won't fight to hold our government accountable for these abuses then I don't have any faith in them and would vote no confidence. If our government continues to choose a path of undermining our public universities, I will also express my discontent with a vote of no confidence as well."

Written Public Comment Continued.

5/5/2026 9:45:00

Shirley Donnelly - Community Member

The Importance of the Music Department to our music and arts community
Written Public Comment

"I understand that we are living in extremely hard financial times but the complete elimination of the SOU Music Department would be devastating to our community. I represent the Rogue Valley Symphonic Band, an important Wind Ensemble providing free concerts to our community. We are the 2nd largest group in the Valley performing and providing exposure to live music and repertoire not found elsewhere. Many of our performers are students, Music Educators and professionals from all walks of life. My chosen profession is Medicine but being able to perform on my instrument adds a balance and richness to my life that I can't get anywhere else. We would all mourn the loss of this valuable department and resources that it provides to the Rogue Valley. In a town where music and theater are so important to the welfare of the surrounding areas it would be a shame to lose the very entity that feeds musicians into that network. I hope you will consider the "value" this department adds to so many important areas before eliminating it with the swipe of a pen. Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Rogue Valley Symphonic Band, Shirley Donnelly RVS President"

5/5/2026 10:26:57

chris uhtoff - Community Member

preserving general education

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=137v0mAKEPLOVnrzDU5LEwOoTeEiqUVBq>

Written Public Comment

"Dear Board of Trustees

Please don't sacrifice the future of liberal arts and general education at SOU. In Some ways there is no better place to attend university than Ashland. The Quality of life is highest here, theatre arts are the best in the state and the biological diversity makes this the best location to study natural history in the state. SOU has been one of the

Written Public Comment Continued.

finest state schools in Oregon and can be in the future, I don't think we should lose sight of that goal. Creating and supporting citizens with strong critical think skills and curiosity is a responsibility of good government. At the moment Oregon ranks between 41st and 46th in state funding for higher education while being 10th to 12th in cost of living. While The State of Oregon and the City of Ashland have lost their way in providing support for higher education, this can and must be rectified. In the Age of AI, knowledge of the Humanities and critical thinking is more important than ever. In the meantime while costs maybe could be cut more effort should be put into getting increased state, city funding, as well as reaching out to private donors. The City should provide monetary support and actively lobby for funding since the university is historically one of the top two economic driver of our town.

Sincerely,

Chris Uhtoff

78 4th St.

Ashland, OR 97520

"

5/5/2026 11:16:49

Sabrina McNeil - Community Member

KEEP THE ASL PROGRAM !!

Written Public Comment

It is a very highly attended program. Look at the numbers separate of the spanish dept!! We ask you look at keeping the ASL program. It is highly attended and should be looked at separate from the Spanish dept. the ASL program is a very sought after program with waiting lists every year due to its popularity. ASL also is a selling point for SOU as it is receiving so much recognition in the world recently. Not all universities offer ASL.

5/5/2026 11:32:38

Ryan McNeil - Current Student

American Sign Language

Written Public Comment

Written Public Comment Continued.

"I never thought that I would find a passion here at SOU. I registered so that I could stay close to home while searching for somewhere to transfer in favor of my degree. But I can honestly say that the ASL program has changed my life and is the sole reason I will be earning my degree here in June. ASL is a skill without equal, not only for building bridges across communities, but for retraining your brain to new ways of thinking that has expanded my process far beyond any other classes here.

I have nothing but respect for the Spanish program and its faculty, and I strongly believe that foreign language programs are underutilized across this country. But quite frankly, it is unfair to group ASL with Spanish when the former is consistently full with waitlists and currently employs an MA-level teacher and an adjunct professor, while the latter has several half-empty classes and a staff of PhD professors. To claim that ASL is losing money is disrespectful to the staff and students who make this program what it is.

To think of ASL being cut, even if I will not be here to attend, fills me with sorrow. I am more grateful than I can put into words for that the program has done for me, and to think that future generations of students won't be granted the same opportunity is very disheartening. "

5/5/2026 12:19:25

[REDACTED]

Becky Durango - Community Member

[REDACTED]

Proposed Cuts to SOU curriculum too catastrophic
Written Public Comment

Cutting the music and creative writing departments is wrong. Our community thrives on the arts - ! It's a mainstay for the future as well as the foundation of local history and culture, it brings in business opportunities and tourism. In this time of challenge, the arts are needed now more than ever for our local communities continuing health and wellbeing.

5/5/2026 12:46:27

[REDACTED]

Written Public Comment Continued.

Kathy Graves - Community Member



SOU Current Financial Situation

Written Public Comment

“After hearing about SOU's financial situation, I have to wonder how it suddenly became so dire - I have to speculate that it appears to be a result of many years in which the situation was either ignored, swept under the rug, or there was simply hope it would just go away. I guess it is time to pay the piper!

I know difficult decisions will need to be, and must be made. I want the decision-makers to take a close look at preserving the Music Department. In these times of social ugliness and meanness, partisanship and hatred, isn't it the Arts we need now more than ever? Don't we need to be creating music educators so programs can continue and children (and adults) can experience the physical and spiritual benefits of music?

SOU's Music Department has enjoyed a fine reputation as a Music Educator university, as well as being part of the Arts to be found throughout the Rogue Valley (and especially in Ashland).

I live in California but drive up weekly to play with the Rogue Valley Symphonic band which rehearses in the Band Room at the college. We have enjoyed the fabulous skills of Dr. Alex Gonzales, who is the current Director of Bands at SOU. We want him to stay! He is a real asset to the university as well as the community. He is in a position within the Department to train future music educators, and to bring the joy of music to the community.

So, as you deliberate making some tough decisions, please prioritize preserving the Music Department. We need it.

Sincerely,
Kathy Graves

"

5/5/2026 13:41:13

Written Public Comment Continued.

[REDACTED]
Aubrey Anderson - Current Staff

[REDACTED]
Staff Facilities Perspective
Written Public Comment

"As one of the Custodial Coordinators for Academic Buildings under Facilities Management and Planning, I want to add my thoughts on the matter at hand. FMP Custodial is hands down a full asset to at least the two other custodial teams on campus. We have helped Housing Custodial clean for their summer turn over for several years. We have given them equipment and consult when asked. The team at the SU has also had us come and offer advice and assistance. We've even let the Hawk use our equipment several years in a row for cleaning during breaks. We might seem like a large team but when you go by sqft we are at a deep deficit. Still we show and clean. We show up and we help. We offer cleaning for overtime events and are instrumental in coordinating and doing our part for bigger events like commencement. We are here no matter the weather. We start clearing snow on wintery days before the sun even breaks. We continue until we have paths and stairs cleared or a snow days is called and we are sent home. We're called essential and were here during uncertain frightening pandemic years. Our lives, health, safety, and now our work are easily discarded. It's absolutely heartbreaking to have teams like ours that do so much with so little on a throwaway list. As if we are some junk in the back of the drawer that can be so easily discarded. We are one of the lowest paid employee groups on campus. Our leadership team has done well at staying on budget. We repair old equipment instead of getting new. Yet here we are on the chopping block. I hope that this report is being fully scrutinized because from this perspective the data seems twisted. While I understand the logic of needing to consolidate and reimaging the university; what I don't understand is how saving 10% off the back of the least paid employees makes any sense at all. This unempathetic treatment by some outside consultant group, doesn't see or hear a full picture. One month to look at data representing one year at this university is not enough. When you make claims about outsourcing there should be data to back it up. I highly suggest that before anyone makes sweeping cuts to SOU's staff, you get the numbers down on how much outsourcing will cost in the end. "

5/5/2026 13:46:36
[REDACTED]

Written Public Comment Continued.

Iris DeMello - Community Member

[REDACTED]

Classes at SOU

Written Public Comment

The music department at SOU is VITAL!!!! Please do not eliminate it!

5/5/2026 14:17:28

[REDACTED]

Donald Hall - Community Member

[REDACTED]

There must be a better way

Written Public Comment

From what I can tell, the solution to SOU's financial problems is - hollow out the institution and let it die a slower death than they believe it is dying right now. What options did the contractor explore before it came up with its draconian plan to kill much of the liberal arts of SOU? I recently read a letter suggesting that four institutions of higher learning in SW Oregon could be combined into one called the University of Southern Oregon saving dramatically on administrative costs and reducing redundancy between the various campuses.

5/5/2026 14:36:14

[REDACTED]

Margaret Vollmer - Community Member

[REDACTED]

Music Program

Written Public Comment

I am an alumni of both the SOU music program and the education department, graduating with my BA in Music Conducting in 1999 and my MA Teaching in 2000. I have taught music for 26 years in San Jose and Fontana California, and owe my entire career to the incredible education I received at SOU. I am in strong opposition to the plan to eliminate the music program for next year. The Music department is not just a place to take classes, it is part of Ashland's culture. While hard choices sometimes do need to be made in difficult financial times, I feel strongly that SOU and Ashland will not be complete without the Music department at SOU. I have to wonder also what will

Written Public Comment Continued.

happen with those students currently majoring in music, who may be close to finishing their education and are unable to pivot quickly-eliminating this program could mean a disaster for future musicians and educators. Please consider other options to deal with SOU's financial crisis which will keep music alive in Southern Oregon.

5/5/2026 14:36:44

[REDACTED]

Edith Montgomery - Community Member

[REDACTED]

Eliminating the Music Department at SOU

Written Public Comment

The Music Department has been a mainstay of SOU and the community for decades. The Music Recital Hall was built 50+ years to support the music program. Because of the excellence of the music program, foreign students come here to study and learn. The Music Department not only serves music majors but all the students in the University who wish to continue their participation in music which they have experienced since grade school. Eliminating the Music Department would be a great detriment for all existing and potential students and would lead to SOU being less attractive to potential students. Please do not eliminate the Music Department. It is one of the crown jewels of SOU.

5/5/2026 15:01:27

[REDACTED]

Evan - Community Member

University Income Plan

Written Public Comment

Why is the plan more weighted towards cutting costs than raising revenue?

5/5/2026 15:09:50

[REDACTED]

Written Public Comment Continued.

Isabella Jones - Current Student

Save GSWS

Written Public Comment

SOU has historically been a space that celebrates EDI, with it being recognized 8 years in a row as one of the top 40 LGBTQ+ friendly universities and the first Transgender Studies Certificate in the nation. Cutting the Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies program is not financially sustainable nor productive. By cutting the Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies program, SOU will lose the support of the LGBTQ+ students. As SOU is marketed as a space for LGBTQ+ students to gain a thorough education in GSWS, social justice, Native American Studies, and sociology, cutting these programs will hinder student recruitment and therefore leave SOU without the financial gain of these admissions. The GSWS program is one that enhances critical thinking. With literacy and critical thinking skills declining across the country, it is necessary to provide these programs to students. People want to come to SOU because it is accepting of diverse identities, has skilled and knowledgeable professors in these areas, and is a small town university where they can feel comfortable. By cutting the Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies program and its professors, SOU will lose money. I have continued my education at SOU because of the Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies program, taking on more classes than necessary so I can learn from the amazing professors specifically in this program. There are many students who feel the same. This program is essential to the financial wellbeing of SOU.