

## Tuition Advisory Council

Monday, March 2, 2020

### Council Members (✓ indicates the member was present)

✓ Stephen Battaglia – Student

Katie Carr – Student

✓ Leslie Eldridge – Faculty Member

✓ Sarah Guenther – Student

✓ Johanna Pardo – Student

Dennis Slattery – Faculty Member

✓ (By phone) Matt Stillman – Administrator

✓ Susan Walsh – (Chair) Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

### Guests Present

Josh Lovern, Greg Perkinson

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The meeting started at 1:35pm.

Walsh told Council members to be on the lookout for calendar invitations for the Finance and Administration Committee meeting on the April 20<sup>th</sup> and the Full Board meeting on April 21<sup>st</sup>. She said those are the meetings where the President's tuition recommendation will be considered by SOU's Board of Trustees, and Council members are invited and encouraged, but not required, to attend.

### Minutes

Eldridge/Guenther moved to approve the minutes from the February 24<sup>th</sup> meeting; the motion passed, 4Y/0N/1A (Battaglia, who was absent from the February 24<sup>th</sup> meeting, abstained. Pardo joined the meeting after the vote was taken).

### Enrollment Trends

Lovern walked through a PowerPoint presentation focusing on enrollment trends. The presentation began with a refresher on key terms and concepts like SCH vs. FTE vs. headcount, Academic Year vs. Fiscal Year, and so on.

Lovern displayed a slide with showing tuition and fees paid by SOU students. He explained that tuition and the building and health fees will be discussed by TAC, while the incidental and recreation center fees will not. Walsh asked if it would be possible to pull out online students when this presentation is made to the Board because online-only students are not required to pay the building fee.

Lovern discussed big picture of enrollment trends, starting with national and regional, then focusing in on Oregon, and on SOU specifically. Pardo said she would like to see the comparison before and after the dissolution of the Oregon university system. Lovern said he believes he can put that together. Pardo said with regard to both enrollment and funding it would be interesting to see the disinvestment.

Lovern discussed national and regional trends in enrollment. He noted a projected change in high school graduates between 2019-20 to 2029-30, showing a chart from the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education which projects a -2.5% trend in Oregon. Lovern said this doesn't necessarily translate to our enrollment because Oregon ranks 47<sup>th</sup> in the nation when it comes to high school graduates continuing on to college. He noted that this chart suggests that the northeast part of the country is projected to have some significant decreases in high school graduates.

Battaglia said it is interesting to see Oregon's projected numbers alongside those of Washington (+7.4% projected) and California's (-8.0% projected). He said he would also be interested to see the projected change for Hawaii and Alaska. Perkinson noted that Washington recently made a huge investment in higher education. Walsh added that Alaska made major cuts, which may further benefit higher education institutions in Washington.

Lovern displayed a slide showing the projected number of high school graduates in the west each year from 2013 to 2032. The chart projects a considerable drop between 2026 and 2030. Lovern also called the Council's attention to the numbers relating to diverse students. Moving on to a slide focusing on the projection for Oregon's over that time, he pointed out big projected shifts in Hispanic and Black students.

Walsh mentioned that it was stated at an earlier meeting that SOU actually had an increase in new freshman this fall but students are taking fewer credit hours this year. She said she wonders what's going on with that. Pardo said that she believes students are potentially taking on other duties, additional jobs, and so on to be able to afford college. Eldridge said she's had students tell her they're not in a rush to graduate. Lovern agreed and said his son is an example of that. He said his son entered the university with a considerable number of credits, so he could have accelerated his college experience, but instead has chosen to take fewer credits per term and have more time to enjoy the college experience. Pardo said she's heard from students that they have multiple jobs and aren't taking as many credits. Eldridge said she also thinks students may be thinking more about mental health and balance, not overwhelming themselves. Battaglia said that right before he graduated high school they implemented small schools; curriculum was modified to help students figure out what they want to do and relate elements of their education to those goals. Lovern said this speaks to the idea of increased career counseling to help students figure out what they want. Walsh said part of the challenge is that we have a one-size-fits all system, but there are many for whom that model may not be a good fit.

Woolf joined via the phone.

Pardo asked about the reason for the projected dip in high school graduates after 2026. Lovern said the dip reflects demographics. Walsh said this demographic shift is noted in a book by Nathan Grawe, *Demographics and the Demand for Higher Education*. Lovern said there was a boom in the birth rate before the recession of 2007-8, then a decline once the recession hit.

Lovern displayed a slide looking at the competition for college students in Oregon.

Lovern noted that our Advanced Southern Credit numbers are greater than what we've seen in the past, meaning that students are entering the university with more credits. Battaglia added that some Oregon students who would otherwise choose an in-state university for budget reasons if they were planning to do 4 years at a university now have the opportunity to get their first 2 years free by doing them at a community college and taking advantage of the Oregon Promise, so they may then choose to go out of state for the final 2 years because they've been able to save money.

Woolf added that California and Washington have been investing in their financial aid, so our number of WUE students is going down.

Lovern displayed a slide showing SOU's history of undergraduate FTE since 1926. He then showed a slide looking at FTE since 2000. Battaglia said based on this slide it appears that the 20 year slope overall is a downturn of about 4%. Lovern said that is correct. Eldridge asked about the upswing in enrollments between 2009 and 2012. Walsh said that a downturn in the economy tends to increase enrollments.

Lovern displayed a slide showing graduate student FTE since 1990, which showed a steady increase overall.

Walsh discussed larger trends affecting enrollment. She said if you go back to the time of World War II and the GI bill, education was much more the norm and there was a different attitude about the value of higher education. Many of the previous generation didn't go to college, then the generation of baby boomers were generally college-seeking. In the last several years, the perception of the value of a degree has eroded, partially based on socioeconomic class, partially on political perspective and other factors. She said there's a lot going on societally that can pose additional challenges to us, including the perception that college is elitist. She said she wanted Council members to be aware that we're competing with a lot of perceptions.

Lovern moved to a slide cautioning that budgeting based solely on past performance is like driving while looking only in the rear-view mirror. Walsh said SOU is being thoughtful about having these conversations as we're looking down the road, asking how we can "stop the shift" and trying to figure out what can we do to help ourselves. She said it can be hard to implement changes at a university in part because faculty jobs tend to be quite long and changing the way you do what you do is challenging. Still, we know we have to look at new ways of doing things,

both in our curriculum and pedagogy. She said SOU is engaging in this work with an eye on the future, while some of our peers aren't as future-focused.

Woolf said one typical response of a group like TAC could be "just go get more students," so one reason we show this history and context is to make it clear that it's not that easy. We're not just trying to figure out how to get new students, but also how much to charge the current ones. Walsh added that it's also about how to retain the current students. Battaglia said it's like any business, there is a challenge in trying to keep current customers and also gain new ones.

Pardo said she would be curious to look at the investments SOU has made and see the return on those investments. She mentioned the Schneider Center and the Recreation Center as two examples, and wondered if they should be part of this discussion. Walsh agreed that it's important to consider return on investments and said we constantly do that, it's an ongoing conversation. She said the Recreation Center was a student initiative, and the students voted on it as a referendum twice. She said the Schneider legacy goes way back many years to when the state funding model was different. At the time that investment probably made sense, but it became harder for the students to support it. She said for athletics we constantly look at the return on investment. When we brought in women's soccer a few years ago that was a very good investment for SOU in terms of enrollment.

Perkinson said investments like those discussed are sometimes funded in different ways. He said for example the Ruffalo Noel Levitz work that will help us distribute financial aid in a way that will allow us to provide the most benefit to students was paid for out of the education and general fund. He said there are probably 5 or 6 examples like that in the last year. He said the Recreation Center was a referendum that imposed a fee which goes toward debt service on a bond taken out to pay for the Center. He said some other investments are state investments that we benefit from, like the renovations to the Britt building, the Lithia Motors Pavilion, the theatre, etc. Those are funded by bonds sold by the state, and the state pays the debt service. They are awesome investments as far as we're concerned because the university ends up paying nothing at all. Walsh said each investment yields a different return. If you look at our recent investment in Navigate, that's strictly a retention tool, focused on keeping students here. On the Ruffalo Noel Levitz investment, that's a leveraging model to help us better target student need and make better use of money available. She said Pardo's question is a great one, and there's plenty to dig into. Pardo said it's interesting to see how costs come to students, like with the Recreation Center. Perkinson said that is an interesting example where current students are paying the costs of a decision made by a previous group of students.

Battaglia mentioned that a faculty member had discussed a new eSports minor in development. Battaglia said he is curious about the potential enrollment gains from introducing that minor and a possible team. Woolf said on program like this that would be the first on the west coast, it would build a lot of buzz. He said costs are not looking high on this program, in terms of institutional dollars, as there are some potential partners who may help by providing funding. Walsh said she and several others recently met with a local company building a game that is

getting a lot of attention and there might be an opportunity for a public/private partnership. Woolf said it looks like building a lab for that would cost about \$40K and we've already got potential for more than that in potential sponsorships.

The meeting ended at 2:39pm.