

2025 Oregon Legislative Session: Important Success, Serious Needs Left Unmet

On Friday, June 27 the 83rd Oregon Legislative Assembly adjourned the 2025 Legislative Session. This five month-long session was complicated by a discouraging revenue forecast in May, as well as substantial uncertainty at the federal level around support for higher education and student aid. These factors created a “chilling effect” on legislators’ willingness to commit funds in a host of areas.

Despite these difficulties, Southern Oregon University, its partners and advocates kept a consistent and focused presence in Salem. Throughout the session we advocated for student financial aid, university institutional funding, campus construction projects, and the importance of public higher education in Oregon’s long-term approach to economic development and job creation.

SOU’s 2025 legislative agenda focused on promoting affordability for students and supporting a higher amount of institutional funding for universities through the Public University Support Fund (PUSF), as well as SOU’s Creative Industries capital construction proposal.

Detailed information about SOU’s 2025 Legislative Agenda can be found [here](#).

Legislative Session Results -

The 2025 Legislative Session produced mixed results for SOU. The University achieved some significant wins but, like many other public universities, saw serious needs from students and our institution go unmet.

Funding was the most consistent shortcoming of this legislative session. The Public University Support Fund (PUSF), was approved for only a \$69 million increase from 2023-25. This amount is well short of the \$275 million requested and not in keeping with what universities have shared is required to maintain operations at a current level. The PUSF is the primary source of state funding for all seven of Oregon’s public universities.

Support for the Oregon Opportunity Grant was another place where funding fell short. SOU advocated for a \$100 million increase in order to support equitable access to higher education for all students. Legislators chose not to increase funding substantially, and instead approved current service level funding, meaning that fewer students will get financial aid from OOG.

Despite these disappointing outcomes, the 2025 session produced several exciting achievements. The first was a concept brought to the legislative process by SOU mandating the Higher Education Coordinating Commission to review reporting requirements and aim to minimize duplicative reporting. This will help streamline and reduce costs by limiting redundancies and allowing universities to be more efficient.

But, perhaps SOU's biggest win was the funding of our Creative Industries capital construction project. The state approved \$40.5 million in bonds to be issued to help fund SOU's \$45 million Creative Industries and Student Success and Leadership Center. Creative and digital industries are an important part of the Oregon economy. The funding of this project demonstrates a commitment to student success, and will allow SOU to serve more students and expand our efforts to create jobs in the region. We anticipate the bonds to be sold in the Spring of 2027 and for construction to start soon after.

SOU held several extremely successful advocacy events that supported the positive results we did achieve. Friends and supporters of SOU demonstrated the value and importance of the university through a variety of means. From in-person testimony to letter writing and more, SOU advocates showed their support.

On March 4th SOU had its first SOU specific lobby day in at least five years. Over 40 students and close to 20 administrators, staff, faculty, trustees, and alumni participated. They visited 53 legislative offices to advocate for the needs of SOU. This was an important demonstration of the strong support for the university.

SOU Resiliency Plan -

The mixed legislative results added to mounting pressure on higher education institutions. The SOU Resiliency Plan was developed in response to this pressure. This plan reduces the size of the institution and aims to create an SOU that is more focused, more responsive, and more resilient. These changes are difficult and were not taken lightly. Months of deliberation, revision and collaboration with all of SOU's shared governance partners—students, faculty and staff (including organized labor) went into these decisions.

The Resiliency Plan takes a two-pronged approach, focusing on decreasing costs and increasing revenue. It emphasizes efficiency, streamlining, and alternative funding resources, as well as recruitment, retention, and reputation.

The final version of this plan is intended to better align SOU with regional workforce needs. It focuses academic offerings into three sectors: Regional Economy, Community Health, and Creative Industries.

An in depth explanation of the Resiliency Plan can be found [here](#).

Next Steps and a Request for Your Help-

As the university embarks on its retooling for the future, it is critical to continue advocating for legislative support of higher education in general and for SOU in particular. **The Office of Government Relations needs your help** to continue making progress for the university. Participation is a critical part of the political process and advocacy is one important way to get involved. You can participate in a range of options, from attending lobby days in Salem, making phone calls, and sending letters to elected officials.

If you are interested in participating in our efforts please register at [this link](#).