



The Association of Oregon Faculties

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From the President



One of AOF's current preoccupations is the adoption by the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) of an "outcome-based funding" (OBF) model. It is clear that a portion of the budgets of all the universities will be subject to this OBF. Of particular importance is the question of how academic quality will be encouraged and rewarded, since it varies according to discipline and defies simple measurement. Academic degrees and related milestones, on the other hand, are easily counted. We are heartened that HECC members acknowledge this conundrum and the risk of unintentionally taking actions that could lessen the value of an academic degree. We are encouraged also that the HECC is soliciting advice from the interested parties: faculty, students and university administrators. To this end, the AOF board is offering ideas to identify a range of degree-related outcomes as indicators of quality (e.g., degree capstones, well-paid, stable jobs for graduates, publications, presentations at meetings, acceptance into graduate programs, artistic performances). The AOF board will continue to participate in this discussion.

If you are not already an AOF member, please consider becoming one! AOF is not a union, but through its faculty board and lobbyist, we provide a strong voice for the faculty of all of Oregon's public universities. Our dues are only \$90/year. This link gives details on joining (<http://oregonfaculties.org>).

Alan Bakalinsky
Oregon State University

Lobbyist's Report

The 78th legislative session kicked off with a bang on Monday, February 2nd. Several priority bills for the Democratic caucus that had proven somewhat controversial and failed in past sessions had hearings and moved out of committee in the first week. The pace has not slowed down, and over 2,600 bills have been introduced so far, with more coming every day. The "unlimited" bill-drafting deadline passed on February 25, however, and that means the vast majority of bills that can be introduced this session, have been. At this point, each legislator can introduce no more than five "priority" bills, and committees likewise have a limited number of bills they can introduce moving forward this session. The exceptions to this rule are the Rules, Revenue, and Ways and Means Committees, which can draft bills until the final days of the session.

Not surprisingly, there have been numerous bills already introduced relating to higher education: HB 2611 continues key shared services in the university system, SB 702 helps to ensure health care coverage for part time faculty, and HB 3049/SB 113 sets staffing ratios (limiting the number of administrators) at public universities. AOF is closely following these and other bills and engaging on issues of importance

to our membership in the 2015 legislative session.

In addition to all the legislative action, in an unprecedented development in Oregon, Governor John Kitzhaber resigned amid controversy, and Secretary of State Kate Brown was sworn in as Oregon's 38th Governor on February 18th. AOF will be working during this time of transition to communicate on issues of importance to faculty with the Governor and her staff.

The HECC (Higher Education Coordinating Commission) continues to develop a funding allocation model to replace the RAM which includes some form of outcomes-based funding (OBF) for at least a portion of universities' budgets. AOF has engaged on this issue, meeting with HECC officials and providing comments to the HECC requesting that any OBF model ensure that quality be a key component of any metrics by which outcomes are to be measured.

With the numerous bills already introduced impacting Oregon's higher education system, it looks like the frenetic pace of the legislative session will continue, and AOF will be there to advocate effectively for you and your issues throughout the session and coming year.

Chris Parta
Parta Oregon
AOF Lobbyist

Campus Report

Christian Vukasovich, Oregon Tech (Oregon Institute of Technology)

Oregon Tech has had an eventful 2014-2015 year. The university is in the midst of a review of its general education program, a process that involves significant collaboration between faculty and administration. Faculty have also developed a nationally recognized annual assessment protocol, bringing together data sets across all disciplines and the general education curriculum to document achievement of learning objectives. While new areas of study (e.g., Population Health Management, Health Informatics, Coaching minor) have been approved, years of deferred investment in IT and other instructional technologies have taken their toll. Oregon Tech has begun reinvesting in technological resource updates that can no longer be ignored.

After a period of climbing enrollment, a drop of 3% last Fall resulted in a hiring freeze for all departments to offset the gap created by a projected 6% gain. As a result, the university has become more reliant on faculty taking on overload teaching. This risks a decline in teaching quality and has definitely affected faculty morale. It has also raised doubts about the meaning of shared governance with respect to faculty hiring and release decisions. On-going efforts by the Provost to incentivize online teaching are controversial. While online courses are generally considered overload, some departments have begun to count them as part of the full-time

workload. The significant financial incentives to maximize online teaching have been denounced by some departments as undermining pedagogical rigor.

Oregon Tech's internal governance model was inaugurated this year, with a change to a "strong dean" system. In the previous model, deans from each college had less authority and acted essentially as vice-provosts. This change is meant to create a situation where deans are answerable to both the provost and department chairs and may provide them with more autonomy to advocate for their own initiatives. The feeling among some, however, that deans will continue to be ineffective advocates persists.

With ongoing changes in legislation, the formation of the new governing board, and a new funding model being developed at the state level, faculty at Oregon Tech are working to redefine the terms of shared governance before the OIT Board begins work in July. Faculty are cautious but hopeful that the new outcomes-based funding model will not undermine academic rigor or marginalize smaller universities such as Oregon Tech. In this post-OUS environment, it is important that members of all Oregon university communities stay connected and collaborate to mutual benefit. AOF continues to play a vital role in enabling that collaboration.

The Association of Oregon Faculties (AOF, <http://oregonfaculties.org>) is an association that represents and protects the interests of Oregon's public university faculty and professional staff before the Oregon Legislature and various state agencies. Our primary goal is to increase the quality of our professional working environment.

AOF Board

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*** We currently seek a board member from Western Oregon University ***