

Southern Oregon University

Institutional Review Report

May 2015

Table of Contents

SOU's Current Situation	1
● "Conditions" & "Retrenchment" - Background and Current Status	1
● Identifying & Analyzing the Problem	2
● Remedies in Progress	2
● About SOU	4
● Niche & Value	4
● New Governance	5
● Economic Impact	5
Academic Programming	6
● Program & Mission Alignment	7
● Re-Structuring	7
Enrollment & Completion	8
● Enrollment Management	8
● Student Profile	9
● Degree Output	10
Priorities, Planning, & Financial Viability	10
● Level of Investment	11
● 40-40-20 Goals	11
● Financial Position	11
● Strategic Priorities	12
● Summary	14
Appendices	15
● Appendix 1: Admission Recruitment Details	15
● Appendix 2: Identity, Community, & Academic Portfolio	19
● Appendix 3 - Economic Impact Assessment	21
● Appendix 4, The SOU Student	22
● Appendix 5 - Investment Calculations	23
● Appendix 6: Degree Quality & Value	24

SOU's Current Situation

Southern Oregon University has delivered an outstanding education to thousands of students for more than 140 years. Our institution is a key partner with businesses and community organizations as well as with government agencies and other educational institutions. Together we solve problems, foster innovation, and create economic growth.

As public universities around the country face significant changes in state funding and demographics, SOU is responding with initiatives that connect our students with our community while helping them attain the knowledge and skills needed for success in a fast-changing global economy. We are strongly focused on helping a wide range of students prepare for and be successful in college.

"Conditions" & "Retrenchment" - Background and Current Status

SOU has experienced budget challenges since the early 1990's, when Oregon voters passed Measure 5, shifting the funding for local school districts from local property taxes to state funds. State funding since that time has continually diminished, with increases in one biennium typically followed by significant decreases in the next few biennia. Additionally, the Resource Allocation Model provided less allocation to the types of undergraduate courses offered at SOU, instead favoring technology and engineering programs as well as graduate and research programs. As a consequence SOU has had to rely on student tuition for the largest percentage of its revenue, a situation that makes us susceptible to enrollment swings.

In fall 2011 SOU had the largest total enrollment in history. This was the culmination of strategic rebuilding over several years and partly attributed to a strong master academic plan and a 5-year strategic plan developed in 2009. This enrollment growth followed 4 years of significant enrollment declines that began in 2004. In response to that period of growth (2007-2011) SOU added to its programmatic offerings, increased the number of course sections, and implemented new support programs.

In fall 2012 enrollment dropped 4% from the prior year. Additionally, we experienced significant challenges within our Admissions staff and leadership that negatively impacted our recruitment efforts while at the same time student retention rates flattened. To address the revenue shortfall that followed we implemented layoffs, not filling most vacant positions, and increased tuition rates.

In fall 2013 our enrollment dropped again to 5% below the prior year. At the same time we experienced increases in personnel and benefits costs. These enrollment declines were creating serious financial difficulties; however, we were still projecting an ending fund balance of 6% by year end. An OUS accounting policy for recording bad debt reserves resulted in an additional \$2M transfer coming out of the general fund. These challenges resulted in our fund balance dropping below the 5% minimum required by the State Board of Higher Education (SBHE).

Identifying & Analyzing the Problem

Lessons were learned by the prior retrenchment in 2007. Eliminating a few staff positions, one faculty line, but maintaining nearly all of our academic programs was not thorough enough a response. It did however result in SOU becoming very “thin” administratively. At the same time the oversight and management of our academic programs were less than adequate, this due to the grouping of nearly all our academic departments residing within a single school division.

It was clear from early projections of fall 2012 enrollment that the university needed new tools and analyses to inform upcoming decisions. That year we conducted a capacity study focusing on enrollment, facilities, and human resources. In 2013 we undertook a massive program prioritization process designed to evaluate every department, program, and office that either consumed or produced resources. Shortly afterwards we produced a workforce productivity study and those results were intersected with findings from the prioritization process. We integrated our Student and Academic Affairs divisions. We analyzed data conducted by the Chancellor’s Office that was based on the national Delaware cost study model. The recommendations and results from all these efforts informed us how to adapt.

We realized that the status quo was not working and established a transformational or change culture in 2013. But, change is difficult, both in execution and in acceptance, and with any major change effort some people become strongly supportive while others get dismayed when changes move too quickly. Changes recommended from these analyses included the integration of academic and student affairs, the reorganization of all academic departments, a new position to provide direct oversight of all academic resources, a reduction of faculty release, the consolidation of a service center, and identification of academic programs for potential reduction. It was not easy but synthesizing all these data into these actionable initiatives set us on the right track to being more agile programmatically while providing the opportunity for us to build stronger fund balances.

Remedies in Progress

This first year of retrenchment has led to new opportunities in managing our finances. Serious cost decreases, including furlough days, staffing reductions, and structural changes, as well as fund transfers, were included in a budgeting plan that is assisting the university in achieving a 5% fund balance by the end of the 2013-15 biennium and a 10% fund balance by the end of the 2015-17 biennium. Consistent with our retrenchment plan, our metrics have been reported quarterly and in all categories we are meeting or exceeding our targets for 2014-15. Our fund balance especially is showing an impressive single year turnaround from 3.5% ending in FY14 to our currently projected 8.3% for FY15, now just 6 weeks prior to closing.

We have strengthened our student recruitment processes with new leadership that has reinvigorated the Admissions Office and has led to more integrated and innovative approaches. New marketing and communication strategies have resonated well with prospective students. We are building partnerships with southern Oregon school districts and community colleges. While continuing to focus on and prioritize recruitment of in-state students, more recently our recruitment and outreach efforts have strategically targeted select communities outside of Oregon in order to attract non-resident students

and help balance our enrollment mix. Additionally we have been paying particular attention to improving both our conversion rate (applications to admits) and our yield rate (admits to enrolled) within the overall admissions funnel.

[see Appendix 1: Admission Recruitment Details]

We have been addressing SOU's freshman-to-sophomore retention rate in multiple ways. Historically, many students come to us for their first year and then transfer to another institution or drop out due to financial, academic, or personal issues. To address retention issues, we have packaged financial aid much earlier than usual, counseled students in ways to lift their registration holds, and provided housing remissions. We've created an "early alert" SOU Cares system for faculty and staff to identify and assist students at risk; developed the Learning Commons to provide a wide array of academic support services and tutoring and have integrated retention best practice strategies into academic curricula through better advising.

The PEAK (Professional Experience, Achievement, and Knowledge) Jobs program, Honors College and our general education "House" initiatives are key aspects to establish a distinctive campus with the intention they will drive increases in both recruitment and retention.

The continuing success of SOU depends on our offering an academic and residential environment that attracts students from the region, from the West, and from around the world. The new 700-bed North Campus Village and dining facility opened in fall 2013 through a public-private partnership. There was an expectation that new freshmen students living in this facility would retain better than prior year residence hall students and that expectation has proved to be true.

The data gathered from our capacity study provided key information. The students who we retain in highest percentages fall into clear categories: they are athletes; students who participate in cohort-related activities, work on campus, or participate in student activities and clubs; or live on campus. The students who retain are engaged with the campus. We have focused a number of our initiatives in response to these data. As a result, we saw the largest year-over-year increase in retention for SOU with the fall 2013 freshmen cohort; an increase of over 6 percentage points from the prior year retention rate.

Data from our capacity study and program prioritization process have helped us rethink and redesign academic structures as necessary to ensure a nimble and responsive organization. Significant reorganization and restructuring plans have been implemented as a result. Our academic reorganization has replaced deans/associate deans with division directors. We have several key recent hires within the Provost's office: Assoc. VP for Enrollment and Retention, Director of Grants and Sponsored programs, Assoc. VP for Academic Resource Management, and a budget officer. Additionally an Assoc. VP for Budget and Planning was appointed in Finance and Administration. These additions have greatly improved our ability to forecast, report, manage, and assess all our efforts.

Student success is a critical aspect of SOU's mission, but many legacy structures residing within higher education prevent students from achieving success. Chief among them is the way in which most institutions are organized. Our academic reorganization provides students with improved access to

programs and services and SOU has taken an intentional approach to eliminating divides that exist across campus.

The SOU Foundation Board has a new vice president who brings new energy. In recent years, the board has had stable leadership and strategically added new membership. They have a renewed sense of inspiration, purpose, and direction. In their newly adopted fundraising plan, they focus on a scholarship campaign to support students in three areas: Need-based scholarships for Oregon residents, Honors College students, and Employment Scholarships (for our PEAK jobs-on-campus initiative).

We are well aware of the uncertainties in our environment, including the uncertainty regarding state allocations, the state economy, student enrollment trends, benefit and OPE costs, collective bargaining and salary expectations, and the new governance structure. Taken all together, they make it perfectly clear we must budget effectively in the years to come.

About SOU

Southern Oregon University's strong background in liberal arts continues to bolster a comprehensive curriculum that infuses a high-quality liberal arts education into a diverse selection of degree programs. Major offerings are available in the social sciences, the humanities, the STEM fields, the arts, and professional programs of business and education. Comprehensive liberal arts universities such as SOU have mission statements that describe high level expectations for their students. Mission statements generally do not fully explain the complete identity of an organization, that understanding occurs only with deeper insights into the operations, the deliverables, and the strategic priorities of the institution.

SOU is routinely faced with questions regarding our mission and the focus on liberal arts as well as inquiries regarding our responsibility to serve the region versus promoting our institution as a destination campus. Our response: we always strive to find a balance in providing both a liberal arts education while meeting the professional and workforce needs of our region, and indeed it is that strong liberal arts curriculum which allows us to meet those needs. Prospective employers repeatedly say they want candidates that possess the ability to think critically, work collaboratively, and solve real world problems, dispositions that are at the core of a liberal arts education. SOU also needs to maintain a balanced enrollment mix, one that produces strong revenue streams in both tuition and state allocations. To do this we provide equal attention and effort to attracting students from within our region but also recruit students from areas outside of it. Consistent with the American Association of State Colleges and Universities definition that "... a regional university functions as stewards of place..." we remain committed to leveraging the human and intellectual capital of our local students and help contribute to a sustainable workforce within our region.

[see Appendix 2 - Identity, Community, & Academic Portfolio]

Niche & Value

SOU serves its community; our largest major degree programs are all integral to the economic growth of the southern Oregon region. For example, Jackson County embodies the second largest arts cluster in the state, after the Portland metropolitan area. SOU's strong arts programs supports and foster that cluster.

SOU is located in one of the most diverse bioregions in the world and maintains close ties to federal agencies through its programs in environmental studies, biology, and chemistry. We serve the needs of the region for students with excellent communication, practical and analytical skills.

Our data indicate that SOU's competition ranges from community colleges and other OUS institutions to, frequently, private liberal arts colleges. Many successful Ashland High School graduates, for instance, go out of state to college. In rural Oregon, however, a significant area of "competition" is jobs - without a strong college-going culture, students frequently opt out of any postsecondary education. The pipeline for students targeted within the 40-40-20 goals in southern Oregon needs greater support; however, SOU's innovative partnerships and academic programs involving middle school and high school students are major contributors to counteracting these decreases in college bound students from Southern Oregon. In fact, over the last 3 years SOU has maintained a consistent percentage of admitted students from our 7 county region.

New Governance

Effective July 1, 2015 SOU will be operating as an independent public university with its own Board of Trustees. There are significant efforts underway in transitioning from the oversight of the SBHE governing board to a new coordination of activities with the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC). The SOU Board of Trustees and its subcommittees of Finance, Academics, and Executive, have been preparing for this transition, meeting and engaging in regularly scheduled sessions since January.

With powerful connections to our region and distinctive programming and mission, SOU welcomes the opportunity to assume the responsibilities of its own governance. Our students believe that an institutional board that understands our mission and our challenges, and clearly understands our student population, would more effectively advocate for adjustments in funding.

External constituencies such as our alumni, the local Chambers of Commerce, Southern Oregon Regional Economic Development (SORED), local and regional school districts, and others, appreciate the heritage and mission of SOU and understand the critical connections to the economic stability and growth of our region. Many have long-standing successful partnerships, on-going collaborations, or emerging alliances with SOU programs, faculty, and staff. These local external groups are supportive of a governance structure that offers greater university autonomy, increases regional "ownership" of the university, and more fully represents the needs and values of our region.

Economic Impact

In 2013, SOU produced an economic impact assessment with revenues identified at \$13.5 million in state appropriation that gave rise to additional SOU revenue of \$79.9 million. With that state investment, SOU brings in \$5.91 in revenue for every \$1 invested by the state of Oregon. More importantly is the economic assessment of the university's impact on the local economy, determined to be \$237 million. Using the same \$13.5 million in state investment, SOU infuses \$17.55 into the local region for every \$1 invested by the state. The economic impact becomes even more impressive if larger multipliers are applied; ones that recognize these dollars are likely being re-spent more than just one time.

A critical part of this economic impact relates to the graduates who stay in the state of Oregon after receiving their degree. According to a recent survey conducted by OUS, 70% of SOU graduates secured employment within the state after graduation and of those, two thirds were employed within Jackson and Josephine Counties. Recognizing the difference in median earnings of employees with baccalaureate degrees versus those with high school diplomas suggests these graduates created a local impact of over \$26 million.

[see Appendix 3 - Economic Impact Assessment]

Academic Programming

Our retrenchment plan was designed to accomplish several major objectives. One objective was to eliminate programs that have low enrollments and low student interest. Another objective was to re-size all programs to their projected enrollments for the next five years. This re-calibration provides the flexibility to allow investment in existing programs that have capacity to grow and new programs that meet regional needs and student interests.

The retrenchment plan was not designed to change the essential character of SOU as an institution, but it does give us the opportunity to re-focus SOU's program portfolio and use more effectively the resources available. The plan enables the university to reflect more intentionally on the needs of students preparing for the shifting social and economic environment of the 21st century.

The program prioritization process was designed to quantify and evaluate every program, department, and key university functions. Its main objective was to help identify the proper balance in allocating those resources to areas deemed to be essential to achieving the mission and strategic goals of the institution. This was an invaluable exercise for our retrenchment planning in that it provided much needed evidence and justification for eliminating and downsizing programs. Moreover, the prioritization findings, the capacity study, and the workforce productivity study all continue to serve us as we move forward in considering additional program reductions and to strategically plan for investing in programs where there is potential for growth. Data from these analyses, including future updates to them, and the oversight by our new AVP for Academic Resource Management will assure that our academic program offerings will be continually scrutinized and adjusted as needed so that the university remains fiscally viable.

Through academic reorganization and planning, we have focused intently on curricular reform: changes that strengthen our mission, refine our focus, and serve our students more efficiently and effectively. Academic planning processes will contribute substantially to cost savings but, importantly, also to forward-looking curricular approaches that attract and support today's students and prepare them for employment opportunities. It is vital that we create a springboard for growth and for the development opportunities that will arise in the future.

The academic planning process includes following through with program elimination and reduction scenarios described in the retrenchment plan and implementing program metrics and accountability.

Academic divisions, working collaboratively with the Provost's Office, ensure program costs are reduced and enrollment strategies are in place to enhance revenue. Each Division has developed a plan that serves as a blueprint for making adjustments for more efficient course scheduling, better monitoring of faculty release time, managing supplies and services expenses, and planning for more focused curricula attuned to today's students and career opportunities.

Program & Mission Alignment

Our mission statement is intricately aligned with the core themes that have been adopted by our accrediting body, the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU):

1. Student Success: SOU students will be prepared for personally rewarding vocations and satisfying lives by developing intellectual and practical skills.
2. Intellectual Growth: SOU students will acquire and expand upon both broad-based general and specialized knowledge in one or more specific discipline(s).
3. Responsible Citizenship: SOU students will be prepared to serve in personally and socially responsible roles, both locally and globally.

These themes are the basis that NWCCU uses in evaluating and accrediting our institution. Progress toward them continue to be tracked very closely within a myriad of student assessments but also within the outcomes established in both the academic and administrative and support departments.

Additionally, at the request of the HECC and in consultation with the President's Council, the statewide Provost's Council is in the process of developing a matrix that will assist all seven public institutions in supporting the state's goals for increasing access to quality education and ensuring student success. That work is ongoing and once finalized will help inform SOU's curricular and co-curricular planning efforts.

Re-Structuring

SOU has undertaken major cost reductions that have affected every administrative office of the university. In 2009-10, the global economic downturn led to severe state reductions and reduction of SOU's reserves. Despite these reductions, the decision was made to preserve academic offerings and services that directly impact students. In that year, staff reductions totaled approximately \$1.5M: 10 administrators and 4 classified staff were noticed, and 9 vacant positions were eliminated.

In 2012-13 SOU again reduced expenses. Student Affairs and Academic Affairs were integrated and the Student Affairs areas were extensively reorganized. Staff reductions that year totaled \$1.238M. These included 7 administrators, including the Vice President for Student Affairs and the Dean of Students, and 10 classified staff.

Across the campus, there have been staff reductions in areas of Student Health and Wellness Center, Human Resources, custodial and grounds staff, and IT. We outsourced our bookstore to capture a \$1 million fund balance. Administrative staff and faculty members are currently taking furlough days. Assessments of our auxiliaries have been increased. We consolidated the services of our staff employees

into a Service Center model that more efficiently manages all the accounts payable, budgeting, and HR/payroll duties; functions previously duplicated across dozens of departments.

With the creation of the new academic divisions and a consolidated service center, SOU achieves budget savings from eliminating deans and creating staffing efficiencies, projected savings that total \$1.08M. With this reorganization, eleven currently budgeted staff lines were eliminated (2 administrative, 8 classified, 1 unclassified) through retirements, not filling open lines, and layoffs.

At the end of this academic year SOU will have a very large number of faculty retire and re-investment in faculty positions will be critical; however, we must 1) balance the distribution of our tenure track faculty with those in instructor and adjunct roles, 2) balance the distribution of ranks (Assistant, Associate, Full) within the tenure track faculty, and 3) strategically reinvest in programmatic areas.

Enrollment and Completion

Upcoming fall 2015 enrollment patterns demonstrate strong potential, particularly with resident freshmen. To date resident freshman show a 19% increase in applications, a 20% increase in admits, and 31% increase in paid deposits from this time last year. Overall, including all freshmen and all transfer students, there is a 12% increase in applications, a 17% increase in admits, and a 33% increase in paid deposits.

[see Appendix 1: Admission Recruitment Details]

Despite these promising signals, we continue to use very conservative enrollment projections in our planning, projections that come from the most current work in the OUS Institutional Research office. For fall 2015, these point to a 1.1% decrease from fall 2014 and a 0.2% increase between fall 2015 and fall 2016.

As we strengthen the SOU brand, we will continue working on plans regarding WUE and differential tuition. In fall 2013, we implemented differential tuition for three programs: undergraduate programs in theatre arts and music and a graduate program in education.

Altogether, data-supported initiatives are creating stronger enrollment planning, more coordinated recruiting and retention strategies, and a stronger plan linking enrollment and budget planning.

Enrollment Management

A key factor in all our budget and organizational planning has been consideration of enrollment patterns, recruitment, and retention strategies. SOU is moving forward aggressively and with new leadership in these areas and with initiatives that connect us with potential and existing students, their families, and alumni in Oregon and around the country. We have combined a sophisticated array of strategies with a refined ability to retrieve, analyze, and apply data.

These strategies are being implemented with consideration given to the state's changing demographics. According to the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, the total number of high school graduates in Oregon is projected to gradually decline and hold steady around an average of 37,500

through 2022-23. There will be a brief spike in the three years following before high school graduates begin declining again. Additionally, the proportion of those that are white non-Hispanic will see a drop from 78% in 2008-09 to 60% by 2027-28, while Hispanic graduates will increase from 12% to 32% over that same period.

An SOU enrollment and recruitment team has been working strategically to positively impact enrollment. Preview Day numbers and admission application “funnel data” for fall 2015 are extremely positive, attributed in part to the following:

- Communication plans and recruitment efforts have been enhanced so that students are aware of first-year experiences, faculty-student engagement, and distinctive programs such as Houses, Accelerated Baccalaureate, Honors College, and PEAK jobs.
- Recruiters for specific territories receive weekly reports within primary (southern Oregon), secondary (Portland and the rest of Oregon), and tertiary (out of state) markets.
- With new automated marketing and recruitment tools, we have consolidated and refined management of contact/prospect information for targeted audiences.
- Social media assets, the SOU website, digital media productions, advertising, print materials, and other communications have created an effective shared messaging platform that is driving awareness and interest among our target audiences.
- Deployment of a summer bridge program to prepare freshmen (primarily Oregonians) given provisional admission or who have been identified as success challenged.
- College fairs, social media messaging, and specific campaigns are targeting Portland, Colorado, Arizona, Nevada, southern California, Idaho, and Washington.

[see Appendix 1: Admission Recruitment Details]

Student Profile

In fall 2014, SOU student headcount was 6,245 (4,353 FTE). 90% were undergraduates, 10% were graduate students. 71% of our students are Oregon residents and 29% are non-residents. Within our resident student population 61% are from Jackson County, 17% from surrounding southern Oregon counties, 11% from a three-county Portland area, and the remaining from other Oregon counties. Approximately 43% are men and 57% women, 70% are age 17-25, and 30% of them are 26 and older; the average age of our students is 26. We are very pleased that 12% of our students are from underrepresented ethnic groups and if including students reporting a multi-racial affiliation the rate increases to 16%. When considering all ethnic and internationally diverse student populations the rate increases to 18%. These numbers have grown steadily over the past six years at SOU as we have increased our targeted recruiting of diverse populations and strengthened our Office of International Programs and the Office of Diversity and Inclusion.

[see Appendix 4: The SOU Student]

Many factors affect SOU student retention, persistence, and graduation rates. Data show clearly that students who live on campus, work on campus, play on athletic teams, and study in cohort-related programs and practical experiences retain at higher rates than those students who are not so deeply connected and engaged. For example, admitted undergraduate students who participate in intercollegiate athletic programs retain at a 10% higher rate than other students and those that are

employed on campus retain at 11% higher rate. We have responded to these data by strengthening and increasing opportunities for connection in all these areas such as expanding work opportunities that now include more than 1000 student jobs per year and adding targeted cohort programs such as the SOU project-based general education program called the House Experience and the SOU Honors College.

The Associated Students of SOU have stated that the first priority of their constituents, in order to keep tuition increases manageable, is to advocate for greater state support. In small group sessions, students express repeatedly that the connections they have with SOU faculty and staff keep them enrolled and inspired, despite the challenges in their lives. Students want to keep reasonable class sizes and close contact with their professors. Feedback from alumni emphasizes that they deeply value the personal connections and the balance of liberal arts and practical experiences that are the hallmarks of an SOU education.

Degree Output

SOU conferred over 1000 certificates, bachelor, and master degrees during the 2013-14 academic year. Over 190 licensure recommendations in teacher education were submitted to the Teacher Standards and Practices Commission (TSPC). The number of bachelor degrees awarded has increased 18% over the last 5 years but we recognize that over the last 10 years conferred degree counts have not shown the same dramatic increases as other Oregon public universities. This is simply a function of total enrollment. Over this time period the number of degrees produced by all Oregon publics, including SOU, have been 21-23% of their total FTE enrollment. However SOU's enrollment has remained somewhat constant during this period with only a 5% growth while the other institutions growth has ranged anywhere between twice to five times that rate. This difference in enrollment growth skews the perception that SOU is not keeping pace in degree production. In fact, over the last 10 years SOU has produced the same number of degrees per capita as the other universities.

[see Appendix 6: Degree Quality & Value]

Priorities, Planning, & Financial Viability

The SBHE and the Chancellor's Office have asked us to measure financial sustainability through our budgeted operations ending fund balance. A drop in enrollment in 2013 and a mandated accounting adjustment caused SOU's reserve to drop below the SBHE's mandated 5% minimum. Accordingly, our current financial sustainability goals are to (1) achieve a 7.6% or better ending fund balance as of June 30, 2015, and (2) achieve a 10% or better ending fund balance by June 30, 2017.

Our strategies have included academic program elimination and reduction, reorganization of academic affairs, mandatory unpaid furlough days, reduction in personnel, both staff and faculty, and increased internal administrative overhead assessment. However, in moving forward, it is impossible to construct a financial model that exactly predicts all the possible variables impacting our modeling. Variables such as future enrollment, future state allocations, health care and PERS benefit costs and staff and faculty bargaining outcomes are well understood and monitored regularly but many other external forces can

quickly derail a financial model. At present SOU is on track to achieving an ending fund balance of 10%, or better, by the close of the 2015-17 biennium allowing us to weather unforeseen issues.

Level of Investment

The investment that Oregon makes in state funding for a resident undergraduate student at SOU can be added to the additional investment the student makes in tuition payments to represent the total contribution required to earn a four year degree. Last year at SOU that amounted to \$38,378 and represents the smallest investment among the four TRU's. However, there is a gap between this total investment to earn the degree and the cost to deliver that degree. The gap for SOU students is the largest among the TRU's. SOU continues to try and protect its students by keeping tuition rates low while at the same time absorbing the decreases in state appropriation.

[see Appendix 5 - Investment Calculations]

Since many SOU students struggle financially, we must continue to be diligent in keeping tuition increases to a minimum so as to continue to provide access for our rural Oregonians. However, the State of Oregon and the HECC also have a critical role for the state to reach the 40-40-20 goal. It is therefore imperative that Oregon reinvest in rural regions such as ours and adequately subsidize the costs to educate Oregonians seeking a baccalaureate degree.

With a shift to an outcomes-based versus a credit-hours-based state appropriation funding model, it is very important for the state to partner with us in strengthening resources and student success initiatives, supporting and promoting student persistence and the completion of degrees. Further, the new model provides incentives for at-risk populations such as 1st generation, low-income, and underrepresented minorities, all students that require even larger resources and efforts to help succeed. As a result reducing that gap between total investment and total cost to educate now becomes a larger challenge.

40-40-20 Goals

The SOU Recruitment Plan for 2014-15 suggests growth rates in our targeted populations are in line with historical trends. However, achieving 40-40-20 targets for SOU requires us to continue to achieve a nearly a 3% growth rate in conferred degrees each year for the next 12 years.

While SOU has the physical capacity to support significant enrollment growth on both the Ashland and Medford campuses, increasing the number of rural students who are prepared for and can be successful in college requires investment. SOU is working with planning partners across the region to achieve 40-40-20 goals.

Financial Position

Fiscal Year 2014

While largely successful, the one-time savings, primarily from transfers of fund balances from Auxiliaries into the general fund, were down a bit from the original plan. However, other one-time savings from reorganization were achieved. Revenue was slightly better than projected due to a continuing shift of student profiles to more online and more non-resident students who both pay slightly higher tuition.

Additionally, miscellaneous other revenue was up over \$1 M due to one-time events that are unlikely to repeat. Strict implementation of the retrenchment plan, primarily in areas of staffing and the management of that staffing, have delivered on the projected savings. There was also strict adherence to the spending plan for service and supplies which kept discretionary costs from negatively impacting fund balance.

Fiscal Year 2015

Continued focus on the process of managing faculty through the Provost's Office has kept SOU on target for projected faculty savings, and even slightly ahead. Significant effort has resulted in increased revenue due to small increases in enrollment over projections, as well as the change in the mix of enrolled students.

Due to being well ahead of the retrenchment targets, SOU has been able to invest in some necessary IT infrastructure and return planned transfers from our housing division, allowing necessary investment in their facilities as well as future rate moderation. Continued diligence on spending decisions in the area of service and supplies has kept spending to a minimum.

Strategic Priorities

SOU's ongoing sustainability and success depend on a strong vision and strategic plan for the entire university. After the transition to permanent leadership and a new governing board, SOU will initiate a new strategic planning process, one that will build on all the work that has been done within the last two years. Moreover, the changing realities of our enrollment mix, tuition options, and local and national economies require that the university plan in an intentional way that is unencumbered by our current retrenchment process.

SOU's future strategic plan will ensure flexibility. We must be nimble and responsive with regard to key benchmarks related to enrollment and state allocation, enrollment projections, demographic changes, and other environmental scans. We will be proactive by establishing priorities for reinvestment and understand the importance of investing in areas central to our mission while reducing costs overall. Over time, with an ongoing fund balance of 10% or higher, we will have sufficient financial flexibility to invest regularly in the university's priorities while buffering us from fluctuations in enrollment. With strong administrative and faculty leadership, we are confident in developing a new strategic plan that provides a solid foundation for mission-driven and data-driven decision making.

SOU remains committed to achieving fiscal stability through a dynamic approach to recruitment and retention, budget development and resource management, and developing strategic partnerships. We recognize that these objectives require continuous self-evaluation, strong fund balances, the ability to adapt quickly in a changing environment, and collaborative approaches to solving problems.

We must continue to strengthen the University's role as an economic and cultural partner and catalyst for the region through our curricula, scholarship, and service. To that end, SOU will rely on a new economic impact study commissioned by the president's office this past January to inform our understanding of how to better develop our academic and support programs in ways that bolster the

local community and the greater region. Building relationships is a critical focus for the institution to assure ongoing opportunities for recruitment and collaboration with our local partners.

We need to do more to improve retention rates. Student retention from first to second year remains a challenge for SOU. To address this issue, we launched initiatives in fall 2013 based on nationally recognized best practices for retention. As mentioned earlier we opened an Honors College and initiated two more freshmen cohort learning communities called the House Experience, an alternative general education program that is project-based and team taught. Also mentioned previously, we have finished construction on a new housing and dining complex and made available increased numbers of campus jobs for students. Student club participation and attendance is soon to be tracked to determine how these activities add to our student retention rates. The athletic department has started two new intercollegiate programs this year in men's soccer and women's wrestling as well as established a new sport band. Research indicates that students involved in these types of programs have retained at higher rates than students who do not engage in these cohort experiences. Recent results of these efforts were seen in the large increase of our fall 2014 retention rate cited earlier.

\$250,000 was made available to SOU as a result of a legislative action. The campus agreed that student success—a core theme in our mission—would be something that all stakeholders could support. We then engaged the entire campus in identifying, reviewing, and implementing initiatives that specifically focused on investing in student success.

A call for proposals went out to all faculty, staff and students during fall term; over 30 proposals were submitted. They ranged from small support initiatives to better connecting students to resources on campus to the creation of a comprehensive bridge program that supports students identified in academic at-risk populations.

Each proposal underwent extensive review by members of our Faculty Senate, University Planning Board, and Student Government. The University's Enrollment Council then evaluated all of the feedback from those various entities, and subsequently made recommendations for funding to the Executive Cabinet. The amounts per each proposal ranged from \$1,200 to \$120,000. What follows is a partial list of the approved initiatives:

- Bridge Program
- Student Needs Assessment
- Science Tutoring (Learning Commons)
- Mental Health Library and Digital Mental Health Website
- Technology Relevance in Music
- Long Nights Against Procrastination (hosted by the University Library)

Other initiatives currently under consideration include:

- Open Access Textbooks
- Faculty Writing Fellows Seminar
- Center for Innovation

Part of the proposal evaluation includes details about how Institutional Research will identify and track participation to determine its return-on-investment (ROI). The key measure in this includes the retention rate for the students involved in the programs and how that drives finding permanent funding for the program if its ROI is significant.

Although this was an intensive and sometime very cumbersome process, the administration was committed to the need to being transparent and collaborative and the campus buy-in has been incredible. It required a considerable effort on the part of many people but it is serving as a catalyst for excellent conversations to occur about student success on our campus.

We have set aside within our Retrenchment Plan another \$250,000 for investment next year for a similar set of initiatives. A review of the current process to determine what might be done more effectively and efficiently, while working closely with our new governing board, will establish a robust method for SOU to use in considering the next round of proposals.

Summary

Southern Oregon University is focused on investing in programs designed to support sustained enrollment growth and increased retention. Continued focus on efficiency and utilization metrics will assure we will keep costs to a minimum, while still delivering what is unique about an SOU education.

SOU is committed to working to meet the higher education needs of Oregonians as effectively and efficiently as possible. The most significant challenge facing our university is the long-term trend in reduced public funding. Apart from reversing that decline, the most important focus will be adherence to a sustainable financial plan and the flexibility for operational and programmatic decisions. SOU is committed to alignment across all Oregon public institutions, including high schools and community colleges, our contribution to achieving the goals of 40-40-20, and other HECC strategic priorities.

It is our hope that this institutional review identifies the clarity of our situation, the strength of our institution, our competitive niche, our program alignment with regional needs, and especially our pathway to long-term financial viability. We are confident that we will succeed in growing and sustaining a diverse and distinctive university culture that inspires connected learning and a passion for making a difference in the lives of our students. As President Saigo is fond of saying, "We treat every student as if they're own."

Appendices

Appendix 1: Admission Recruitment Details

The Office of Admissions has collaborated with the Office of Financial Aid, Institutional Research, Marketing, Student Life and other campus community members to increase undergraduate enrollment by utilizing innovative and proven recruitment strategies and effective use of institutional resources including:

First and foremost, our main concentration has been all about building relationships – at every level.

1. Recruiting team relies heavily on the relationships we have been striving to build
2. Increased visits and renewed relationships with the regional community colleges in Oregon and Northern California
 - Strengthened relationship between SOU, RCC, and KCC.
 - The Office of Admissions continues to explore additional ways to leverage time on community colleges statewide
3. We are recruiting and enrolling new students at a time when retention is recognized as a key component of enrollment management, since it has an impact on overall enrollment and is a measure by which the recruitment and decision-making of new students is based
4. Financial Aid is an integral component to the admission and enrollment process and the formation of a comprehensive enrollment strategy
 - The Office of Financial Aid worked diligently to roll out award letters sooner rather than later
5. More aggressive remissions budget
 - Working with AVP for Retention and Enrollment, Director of Financial Aid, and Director of Housing – we have been able to focus on expansions of need and merit based funds to ensure that students can offset their college costs and will assist with retention
6. Examining our current opportunities and promoting SOU as a university that is widely recognized as a distinctive institution where students work with faculty and staff, with surrounding communities, and with each other to explore and tackle real world problems
7. Our office has leveraged technology to more efficiently serve students in the recruitment funnel
 - Strategic use of communication plans
 - Developed and deployed a new look for our outreach and recruitment publications and materials (both paper and electronic)
 - Doing so has allowed our office to develop a recognized brand
 - Has reduced the amount of design/copy edits to allow us to have all of the necessary pieces in place at the appropriate time while keeping a sound bottom-line
 - Continue to fine tune communication plan with special attention to parents, counselors, and transfers
 - Continue to clean and increase efficiency of CRM

- Sent 1,303,447 emails in 2014
 - 54.2% increase in messages sent in 2013
 - 56.6% increase in messages received in 2013
 - 85.3% increase in messages viewed in 2013
 - 77.3% increase in email interaction in 2013
 - Continue to improve quality of our admissions website
 - We have condensed an estimated 50% of our web pages since 2012, and our page views have increased by 13%, meaning fewer pages with more concise content proves to be more effective
 - Visitors are spending on average 30% more time on the website per session than in 2013.
 - High spikes in website activity from social media are most likely attributed to the social media campaigns developed to promote on and off-campus events
 - Between January and March, we had up to 39 visitors per day that accessed our website through social media
8. Revised Student Ambassador program
- Hired a new admissions counselor to assume the point position for our Ambassador Program
 - Intense training for ambassadors
 - Has allowed us to attract the best of the best students on campus for this team
9. We have a highly trained and developed recruitment and operational team of individual who are passionate about education, have an incredible work ethic and demonstrate relationship building skills and provide excellent customer service at all times
- Created an Assistant Director of Marketing and Communications position
 - Position is key in editing/updating/creating publications, managing social media needs, managing admissions website, and managing tele counseling team
 - Created a PEAK position to support Marketing and Communications position
 - Hired two new admissions counselors – one who serves as point for Ambassador Program, and the other to serve as point for group tour management
 - Hired new admissions counselor with a key focus on building relationships with community colleges statewide
10. Campus-wide efforts including faculty calling campaigns that allow prospective students the opportunity to talk with faculty in their major area of study and begin to make the personal connection that is critical to their retention and success at SOU
11. On-campus and off-campus events including but not limited to: Preview Days/Weekends, SOU2YOU events, and Raider Receptions
- Events highlight faculty-student relationships, classroom experiences, and co-curricular opportunities as well as the personal touch that has become the hallmark of an SOU education
 - Feedback from participants is consistently very positive

- Off-campus events have proven to be beneficial in introducing SOU to new markets and provide the high touch and personal attention that students and families are looking for
- 12. Increasing the use and number of tele counselors
 - Created a student Tele counseling Manager position
- 13. Added college fairs in: Colorado, Nevada, Southern California, Idaho, and Washington
- 14. Counselor Fly-In program
 - Very popular with high school/independent counselors
 - Effort to build relationships, expand brand recognition, and influence counselor impressions of SOU
- 15. Admissions-on-the-spot (on-site) admission process
 - Admissions counselors meet with students at select high schools/institutions and offer admission on the spot
- 16. Territory assignments are examined and scrutinized on a regular basis to determine the value of what we are doing and the impact we are having in the respective areas we visit

Our primary areas of focus have been to increase new student enrollment in the following areas:

1. Freshmen – targeted student search, coordinated communication plans, geographically targeted outreach, college fairs, high school visits, campus group visits
 - High school students
 - Local and out-of-state students
 - Athletes interested in our athletic programs
 - We collaborate with University Athletics on admission of student athletes
 - We have collaborated on recruitment efforts – an admissions counselor within our offices serves as a liaison with coaches
 - High-achieving academic scholars for our Honor College
 - Striking the right balance between resident and nonresident undergraduate
 - Currently, the overall total university enrollment is at 70.7% resident and 29.3% nonresident
 - At 12 miles from the border and only five hours from northern California’s population centers, SOU is the most conveniently located out-of-state, public university to 13-million northern Californians (more than three times the population of Oregon)
2. Transfers
 - From feeder community colleges
 - Adults seeking degree completion
 - Part-time and full-time interest
 - Better communication for transfer options
 - We have built better communications and messaging surrounding transfer students

- Students with families
- Returning professionals – continuing education
- Any student with a documented learning difference
- We continue to reach across all demographics to enroll students from diverse backgrounds who are prepared to succeed at SOU and beyond, and who will ultimately make a positive difference in the community

Appendix 2: Identity, Community, & Academic Portfolio

Southern Oregon University's mission is to be an inclusive campus community dedicated to student success, intellectual growth, and responsible global citizenship. We are committed to a challenging and practical liberal arts education centered on student learning, accessibility, and civic engagement. Our academic programs incorporate partnerships, public service, outreach, sustainable practices, and economic development activities that address regional needs such as health and human services, business, education, and outstanding programs that draw on and enrich our unique arts community and bioregion.

Identity

Southern Oregon University focuses on undergraduate education and combines an emphasis on affordability and access with academic rigor. We balance the traditional liberal arts with applied, hands-on learning that connects students with the people and the issues affecting our communities and our state. Each year, more than 2,000 SOU students are working on internships, capstones, and undergraduate research in our region. Every Honors College student is connected with a mentor in the community and focuses on an applied project. Our House Experiences provide an integrated outcomes-based approach to general education that involves students with agencies, nonprofits, and businesses in southern Oregon. Through a variety of delivery modalities and a scheduling format attuned to the needs of working professionals, the Innovation and Leadership program offered at the Higher Education Center in Medford enables working students to attain a university degree in a cohort model that recognizes credit for prior experience. We also connect these students through internal work opportunities through the PEAK job initiative program, providing professional-level jobs and mentoring.

Another distinctive element is our vertical integration with K-12 and community colleges. Every year, over 1,100 high school students from 20 local schools take SOU classes. We work closely with K-12 leadership on the Southern Success initiative, and our partnership with the Phoenix-Talent school district (Pirates to Raiders). This program along with a similar one under development with the Medford school district (Bulldogs to Raiders) connects Hispanic students and families with SOU students, faculty, and staff to create a pathway to university starting in the 8th grade. Our academic programs for Hispanic, Native American, and other middle-school students bring thousands of students onto campus each summer. Our shared building and partnership with Rogue Community College is unique in the United States.

With the more traditional residential campus in Ashland and the Higher Education Center in Medford, SOU offers an outstanding blend of liberal arts and applied programs for our professional workforce.

Our long-term planning includes a significant commitment to Oregon's 40-40-20 goal, and our campuses have the physical capacity to contribute substantially to meet our portion of that goal. We look forward, also, to increased partnership with the other Oregon public universities in providing joint programming in person and online to increase opportunities for Oregonians.

Community

Established in 1872, Southern Oregon University is the only Oregon public or private comprehensive liberal arts university south of Eugene. SOU's primary service area in Oregon includes 7 counties: Coos, Curry, Douglas, Jackson, Josephine, Klamath, and Lake. SOU is also a primary post-secondary education provider to Siskiyou, Trinity, and Shasta counties in northern California.

The major economic drivers in the southern Oregon-northern California region have been evolving over decades. Once dominated by agriculture and wood products manufacturing, economies are now more diversified with growing viticulture, health care, retail trade, construction, and hospitality industries. The public sector and government - federal, state and local - are often major employers in these counties.

As is true of Oregon's and California's rural areas, the region was hard hit during the recent recession and continues to feel the effects. Employment opportunities and average salary rates lag behind the urban areas of the two states. Population growth in the economic hubs of Medford and Redding is static or slightly increasing; population is declining in most of the small rural communities in the region. The average age throughout the region is about 40. The Hispanic community is the largest growing minority population in the area. According to 2012 census data, of the 25 or older populations in Jackson and Siskiyou counties, 20-25% have earned a Bachelor degree or higher. In Coos, Curry, Klamath, Josephine, Shasta and Trinity counties, 16-20% hold Bachelor degrees or higher. In Douglas county, less than 16% of the population over 25 holds a Bachelor degree or higher.

Serving more than 40,000 square miles, Southern Oregon University contributes significantly to both the economic vitality and the vibrant cultural life of the region. It is one of the largest employers in Jackson County and the largest employer in Ashland. It was central to the founding of the internationally known Oregon Shakespeare Festival and the Britt Music Festival. Our students contribute to the community, providing service in the form of internships, practica, undergraduate research and volunteer work. Nearly half of our students work at paying jobs off-campus.

Portfolio

SOU offers 36 undergraduate and 11 graduate majors within a portfolio of approximately 150 academic programs; however, these offerings are being reduced over the next three years to more closely align with current student desires and to meet financial goals. Moreover, during our academic reorganization process, programs have created plans to more effectively meet student and workplace needs and priorities.

In the new academic structure, clusters of academic programs are focusing on serving students even more effectively, enabling further interdisciplinary collaboration and increasing the focus on career opportunities. For example, Environmental Studies and Communication has been aligned with the Business program to enhance professional skills and connections with environmental programs, a

hallmark for SOU. Similarly, performing & visual arts has been aligned with emerging media and digital arts, creating a synergy of traditional arts with 21st century knowledge and skills.

SOU's accreditations and affiliations include the NWCCU, the TSPC, Accreditation Association of Ambulatory Healthcare (AAAHC), and the Council for Accreditation of Counseling & Related Education Programs (CACREP), American Chemical Society (ACS), and the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM). SOU has articulation agreements with all southern Oregon and northern California community colleges located in the region as well as articulation agreements with most Oregon community colleges.

Appendix 3 - Economic Impact Assessment

Report: An Assessment of Southern Oregon University's Economic Impact on the Local Region

Design & Methodology - This assessment focuses on the impact that Southern Oregon University has on the regional economies of Jackson and Josephine counties. It uses a similar methodology described in Dr. Larry Singell's 2002 report titled A Study of the Economic Impact of the University of Oregon. Dr. Singell was previously a professor of economics at the University of Oregon and in 2011 became the Executive Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Indiana University, Bloomington. The data used in this assessment includes SOU expenditures and activities during the 2013 fiscal year; June 2012 through July 2013. A multiplier effect of two (2) has been factored into the analysis to account for the recycling of dollars that occur within the local economy. Many economic impact analyses use multipliers as high as 6 or 7 depending on the industry of the organization. A review of the literature suggested that for university and college organizations a more conservative multiplier of 2 is appropriate.

Student Impact - In 2013, an average of 6,000 students attended the university each quarter. Using the standard student budget published by SOU's Financial Aid Office, \$2,685 of discretionary spending for those students living on campus and \$3,252 for commuter students was identified. Additionally commuter students not living with their parents also have a budget for room and board of \$8,625, and \$3,000 for those living at home. All told, these dollars amount to nearly \$50 million in direct student spending for the year. Applying an economic multiplier of 2 to account for the recycling of dollars that occur locally could mean approximately \$100 million is contributed to the regional economy by the student body.

Employee Impact - SOU is the twelfth largest employer in Jackson and Josephine counties. Over 700 faculty and staff garnered a payroll of \$36 million from the university during the academic year resulting in a potential economic impact of \$72 million after factoring in the multiplier. Additionally \$6.9 million were paid in health benefits to SOU employees and if two thirds of those dollars are funneled back from the insurance companies into local area health care providers, these dollars result in another \$4.6 million of economic impact.

Operational Impact - Southern Oregon University consistently works with and purchases from the local business community as evidenced by \$3.6 million paid out to local vendors and another \$2.4 million paid out in capital project expenditures. In fiscal year 2013 an additional \$35.2 million was spent on the construction of the new student housing complex and approximately 25% of those materials, supplies, and subcontractors were sourced within the local communities. In total these expenditures translate to

nearly \$30 million in economic impact to the region

Visitor Impact - SOU's Raider Registration and Preview Days gather approximately 3,650 visitors to the area during the summer months. The graduation ceremony brought an additional 2,400 friends and families of graduating seniors into the area for commencement. Using an estimate of \$250 spent per visitor these events combined to have an economic impact of \$3 million. Other visitors to SOU include over 15,000 attendees at 56 theatre arts performances, 28 concert performances, and 100 museum events. The Division of Continuing Education had 11,000 registrants involved in youth camps, workshops, Osher Lifelong Learning Institute courses, and community education classes during the year. Equating a dollar impact of these additional 26,000 visitors is difficult but even using a very modest estimate of each individual spending an additional \$25 in the local economy during their visit(s) amounts to another \$1.3 million in regional impact.

Graduate Impact - Results from the 2013-14 OUS Bachelor Graduates One Year Later Survey show that 70 percent of SOU graduates who secured employment after graduation remained in Oregon and of those, two thirds were employed within Jackson and Josephine Counties. Utilizing the difference in median earnings as cited by the US Census Bureau comparing employees with baccalaureate degrees versus those with high school diplomas, the graduates had the potential to create a local impact of over \$26 million. Many of these locally employed graduates were not working at a professional level utilizing their field of study and therefore garnering lower wages than cited but nonetheless these graduates are staying in the area and contributing to the regional workforce needs. Much of this local employment may be directly attributed to local businesses that are active in SOU's annual career fairs where on average 45 companies attend at least one of four main events. Last year 450 students participated in these fairs. Additionally, our Small Business Development Center, operating in conjunction with the U.S. Small Business Association and SOU's Business program, has assisted in creating 15 new start-ups, translating to 33 new jobs.

Appendix 4, The SOU Student

Half of SOU students declare undergraduate majors in five areas: Business, Psychology, Education, Criminal Justice, and Performing Arts. The top five graduate degrees are in Education, MBA, Psychology, Theatre Arts, and Business Management.

Transfers from Oregon community colleges have increased from 193 in 2006 to 567 in 2014, nearly a 200% increase. A majority of these transfers result from our partnership and shared building with Rogue Community College. Similarly, transfers from participating community colleges in California (College of the Siskiyous, College of the Redwoods, Shasta College) have been increasing steadily.

Our students face financial challenges while at the same time 60% are first generation students within their family to attend college. In 2013-14 about 84% of SOU students graduated with an average debt of over \$25,000. 54% of our admitted undergraduates received a Pell Grant with a normal disbursed amount of \$1850/term or \$5,550/year. 65% of our Federal Application for Student Assistance (FAFSA) filers had an expected family contribution of less than \$5,000. The financial aid office disbursed over \$47.6 million in aid, equivalent to \$28 million in Federal Direct Student Loans, \$3 million in Federal PLUS

Loans, \$9.3 million in Pell Grants, \$1.6 million in Oregon Opportunity Grants, and another \$5.7 million in additional private scholarships and remission programs.

We have seen a steady increase in FAFSA filers, 17.5% from 2010 to 2012. In that same period, Financial Aid (grants, loans, work study) has increased 20% from \$41.5M in 2008-09 to \$49.5M in 2011-12 (an increase of \$8M). During the same years, tuition and fees for resident undergraduate students increased 26%.

Retention rates for first-time full time freshmen increased steadily from 62.0% in 2006 to 70.5% in 2010 and most recently 73.6% in 2014. Sophomore transfers retain at 75% and junior transfers at 82.5%. The average retention rate for all admitted undergraduates is 75%.

Six-year graduation rates for new freshman cohorts dropped from a high of 40% in 1999 to a low of 31% for the 2003 and 2004 cohorts. SOU's 2008 first-time, full-time, freshmen cohort reveals a graduation rate of 40%, which rises to over 50% when including those students who completed their degree at any of the Oregon public universities. The graduation rate of all admitted undergraduate students' stands at 61%. Additionally, the OUS Factbook reports that students who have transferred into SOU with an Associate degree have an 85% graduation rate, the highest among all of the Oregon public universities.

The number of students that have an identified disability has increased from 245 in 2005 to 441 in 2013, an 80% increase. With an effective Disability Resource services office and very strong support systems these students are retaining at a rate of 88%, 13 points higher than the admitted undergraduates without a disability and 20 points higher than the new freshman cohort. Also, admitted undergraduate Hispanic and African American students retain at 77% while students engaged in the Success at Southern TRIO program retain at 85%. This suggests that these outreach activities, focusing on a variety of diverse student populations, are very effective at keeping students enrolled.

Current data from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) indicate that SOU exceeds national benchmarks in a number of key areas: for example, 84% of our students indicate they are satisfied with their overall educational experience; 74% state that SOU places substantial significant emphasis on academics.

Student surveys have shown that SOU students suffer significant stressors, many of them financial. Most of our students hold jobs on or off campus. As the average age of our students is 26, many of them have family responsibilities and also balance jobs and academic responsibilities. Medical withdrawals have increased and, similarly, appointments with mental health counseling have increased.

Appendix 5 - Investment Calculations

The total investment of \$38,378 comes from a 4 year average state appropriation per UG resident FTE (source: OUS, Doug Botkin) added to the 4 year average tuition paid per UG resident FTE (calculated off of the official fee books using a 15 hour credit load) and then multiplied by 4 to represent a 4 year time period to complete the degree.

The gap is the difference between the total investment amount and the 4 year average cost to educate one FTE student times 4 years (source: OUS, Doug Botkin).

	SOU	OIT	WOU	EOU
Invested Dollars in 4 Yr Degree	\$38,378	\$54,011	\$38,829	\$43,240
Cost to Educate a 4 Yr Degree	\$41,474	\$54,882	\$40,164	\$43,815
Gap (investment minus cost)	<\$3,096>	<\$871>	<\$1,335>	<\$575>
4 Yr Avg State Appropriation per UG Res FTE	\$4,593	\$7,949	\$4,273	\$5,585
4 Yr Avg Tuition* per UG Res FTE	\$5,001	\$5,554	\$5,434	\$5,225
4 Yr Avg Cost to Educate per FTE	\$10,369	\$13,721	\$10,041	\$10,954

*Tuition amounts based on "non-promise" rates

Appendix 6: Degree Quality & Value

As stated earlier the 2013-14 “Bachelor Graduates One Year Later” survey show that 70% of our student graduates remain in Oregon to work. Our graduates make up significant percentages of the professional workforce in southern Oregon—such as teachers, business leaders, health care professionals, and criminal justice professionals. They are generally employed in the following areas: 48% private/for-profit (non-healthcare); 8% health care; 9% education (3% K-12 and 6% postsecondary); 16% local/state/federal government; and 13% non-profit. Our nationally recognized Theatre program attracts more Portland-area and out-of-state students than the other top majors. Over 90% of the Theatre graduates that we have tracked are employed in professional-level positions around the country.

Every educational program at Southern Oregon University has articulated student knowledge, skill, and disposition outcomes for graduates in their programs. Those outcomes are entered into our assessment tracking database along with how those outcomes will be measured. The NWCCU, our accrediting organization, recently commended SOU for our academic program assessment practices.

The University Seminar (USEM), our year-long freshman seminar, has provided the institution with the most evidence that assessment of student achievement leads to the improvement of teaching and learning. Over the years the USEM program has collected diagnostic data that have been used by its faculty to modify the curriculum. USEM faculty members designed a diagnostic essay assessment tool to be embedded in all sections of USEM at the beginning and end of the year. Data from the diagnostic essays are used to monitor individual student achievement; included is a pre-assessment to use in the design and implementation of each section of USEM.

Achievement data from these diagnostic essays are also used to guide professional development for USEM faculty and to monitor student achievement longitudinally. In addition, these embedded assessments also provide institutional baseline data in the following areas: (1) use of standard English, (2) writing organization, and (3) the construction of logical arguments (a type of critical thinking that is used across all disciplines).

Similar efforts are underway for the University Senior Capstones in which assessment rubrics for the foundational learning outcomes of Critical Thinking, Communication, and Information Literacy will be used by the University Assessment Committee to score a random sample of capstone papers. During this process, the rubrics will be refined as papers from numerous majors are scored and analyzed. This analysis will serve to inform future large scale collection efforts of senior capstones.

The Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) is another source of large-scale data that has been collected to situate SOU on a national context. As noted earlier in this report, the value-added measure within the CLA indicate that SOU's seniors were in the 98th percentile compared to all four-year colleges and universities that administered the CLA in 2012. This value-added measure indicates that, after four years of college education, SOU seniors perform significantly better in critical thinking and writing skills than is typical for seniors from schools admitting similar students.