

Oregon State University: An Engaged Institution

Report of the President's Commission on Outreach and Engagement

Introduction

Given the critical contemporary issues of the state of Oregon and beyond, Oregon State University (OSU) is renewing and strengthening its commitment to address the needs of its varied constituencies by becoming the model of a fully engaged, 21st-Century University. Further, OSU aspires to provide strong leadership in defining the future of outreach and engagement. Toward these ends, an Oregon State University President's Commission on Outreach and Engagement was charged "to help OSU explore and command a far-reaching vision for that future, to help develop an ambitious plan for outreach and engagement for this next century, and to provide a consensus report that suggests future directions for OSU."

The Commission developed this report based on extensive document analysis, including a self-study report; an intense 2½-day site visit, on and off campus; and the wide-ranging and diverse experiences of the Commission members in outreach and engagement.

The Commission applauds President Edward Ray for his vision of and aspiration to an engaged OSU that serves as a national model while making optimal use of available resources and developing new means of engaging with society. We also compliment the OSU administrative team, faculty, and staff for their accommodating, open, helpful, interested, enthusiastic, and critical approach to the Commission's work. The Commission members appreciated the opportunity to look closely at and learn from OSU.

While the Commission found the six questions provided in its charge a useful framework for gathering information, it became apparent through the review and deliberation process that these questions were too limiting as an appropriate construct for organizing this report. Rather, in considering the aspirations of OSU, we were informed and inspired by two sources: the Kellogg Commission's 7-part test of institutional engagement¹ and the Carnegie Foundation's definition and guidelines for community engagement.² We strove to maintain fidelity to

both. These documents as well as other scholarly work and best practice offer direction to OSU in developing engagement as a university imperative. Drawing on these national conceptualizations, we offer the following as a definition of outreach and engagement for OSU:

OSU will identify, pursue, and establish ...

Reciprocal relationships and partnerships

With business, industry, communities, government, other higher education institutions, and individuals

Across the research/discovery, teaching/learning, and outreach/application knowledge continuum

For the purpose of ...

Enhancing the educational experience for its students

Developing and strengthening faculty scholarship, and

Ensuring greater social and economic prosperity in Oregon, the region, and beyond.

Therefore, using the creation of the new Division of Outreach and Engagement as a point of departure, we offer the following recommendations to create the desired future condition of exemplary and leading-edge engagement.

The Commission recognizes three overarching mandates for OSU to achieve its aspirations. First, make outreach and engagement a *presidential priority* and *university imperative* that is clearly articulated, widely understood and appreciated, universally practiced, and enhanced by words, actions, symbols, and culture. Second, *extend and engage aggressively, strategically, and comprehensively* with the State of Oregon, the region, and beyond. Third, *complete and fortify* the currently identified Division of Outreach and Engagement *by expanding* on the realignment of Cooperative Extension and Extended Campus (Ecampus) *to include engagement efforts in other campus units*. These broad mandates will be described as a set of recommended actions.

Recommendations

Mandate #1: Presidential Priority and OSU Imperative

Oregon State University aspires to be among the nation's best universities in terms of its outreach, engagement, and service to the people of Oregon. This goal is both laudable and achievable; it is also very much in keeping with OSU's mission as a premiere land-grant university. Becoming among the best will require commitment to the engagement mission on the part of administrators, faculty, staff, and students across all colleges and schools of the university. The President must clearly make outreach and engagement a presidential and university priority.

We strongly believe that for OSU to achieve its stated goal the outreach and engagement mission must involve all units of the university. The proposed linkage of Extension and Extended Campus is an important step. It is, nonetheless, only a first step. These two units might be viewed as two powerful tools in a comprehensive toolkit that will ultimately include engaged programs and activities in all colleges and units that enhance student learning opportunities, enrich and enhance the relevance of faculty-led research and discovery, and contribute to the economic vitality of all Oregonians.

The Commission offers several recommendations aimed at effectively moving OSU toward its engaged institution goals. Some are symbolic. Some are organizational. Some focus internally to the university. Some are externally oriented. All are important.

Recommendations for Action:

1. Define Outreach and Engagement at OSU
 - The President and Provost should charge a group of academic leaders (faculty, deans, student affairs) to develop and implement an educational program that will enable the university community to understand the concepts of, differences between, and benefits from outreach and engagement as embedded within the mission and functions of OSU.

2. Leadership
 - Expand the senior/executive role for outreach and engagement (currently Vice Provost) beyond Ecampus and Extension to that of institutional leader for Outreach and Engagement; because the current title expresses leadership of a discreet unit, re-title the position to give it broader range. (From this point forward, the report will refer to the broader position as the "O&E Position.")
 - Give the O&E Position appropriate standing (relative to research/discovery and teaching/learning) within OSU, including a designated seat on the President's Cabinet.
 - Fund this expanded position and its functions from sources that are not limited to the two discreet units (Extension and Extended Campus). Some significant funding should derive from central sources reallocated to Outreach and Engagement. Consider also re-directing a portion of indirect returns from outreach and engagement grants and contracts.
 - Sever "Director, Cooperative Extension" from the O&E Position's direct responsibility; a CES Director position should be

created/designated and report to the O&E position. The current titling subordinates ECampus to Cooperative Extension.

- Designate the leader of the Extended Campus to serve on the Provost's Council.
- Add the "Outreach & Engagement" responsibility to an Associate Dean in each college, and equivalent positions within non-academic units (e.g., major research centers and institutes).

3. Strategic Direction

- Task the O&E Position, based on an integrated, university-wide model (engagement within and across teaching, research, and service), with developing
 - An OSU O&E strategic vision document within six weeks
 - An OSU O&E comprehensive strategic plan for outreach and engagement within six months. Ensure that the plan is grounded in the integration of the particular intellectual strengths of OSU with the critical needs of the state and region, and informed by the university's strategic plan including the five university-wide priority themes
- Use the Carnegie Foundation's guidelines for classification as a community-engaged institution as a framework for assessing current status and future strategic emphases.
- Consider the application process for this Carnegie classification as a vehicle for organizational development and strategic planning.
- Create a campus-wide Outreach and Engagement Operations Council (OEOC) to represent academic and functional units. The OEOC will advise on the strategic direction of university engagement such that OSU has the capacity
 - to respond to major, multidimensional priorities such as the five University thematic areas
 - for rapid and coordinated response to other emergent critical issues such as water resources management and policy
 - to provide an intra-university forum for O&E information sharing and collaboration.

4. Invest In and Recognize Outreach and Engagement

- Create a fund for the O&E Position to seed new ventures with significant external partnerships (\$100-250K/year).
- Establish annual, campus-level President's Awards for Outreach and Engagement for these categories: faculty, staff, student, and external partner.
- Revisit the recognition and rewarding of the scholarship of engagement:

- Task the O&E Position with leading a review of promotion and tenure guidelines to assess the extent to which engaged scholarship is recognized and valued.
- Invest in training of university, college, and department faculty promotion and tenure review committees regarding the place and interpretation of the scholarship of engagement within the current OSU promotion and tenure guidelines.

5. Consistent Communication

- Articulate a threefold message from university leadership that is consistent with the strategic direction: We know who, where, and what we are now; we know who, where, and what we want to be; and we know what is required to get us there.
- Charge University Relations and Advancement with communicating this broader conceptualization of outreach and engagement and its impact to stakeholders—both internally and externally.
- Provide a monthly (more or less) one-day visit to an external community by the President and O&E Position to discuss and promote the role of OSU outreach and engagement with the community.

Mandate #2: Extend and Engage Aggressively, Strategically, and Comprehensively with the State of Oregon, the Region, and Beyond

Portland is the major population and business center of the state. It is growing rapidly and will be an even greater magnet 20 years from now. OSU would be well-advised to establish a significant, visible presence in the Portland metro area. There are currently several OSU programs in the region, and they appear to be serving well and are well-received. However, their dispersed and relatively uncoordinated nature (more than 10 separate locations) does not allow full leverage of their potential to place OSU more prominently on the educational and economic development landscape.

Portland State University is nationally renowned for its excellence in community outreach and engagement through curricular engagement and outreach partnerships. A partnership between OSU and PSU could exploit the research capabilities and community engagement capacity of the respective institutions to develop complementary programs and serve the Portland area extremely well. Further, the leadership at PSU appears quite willing to work together in mutually beneficial partnerships.

The Oregon University System also offers opportunities for collaboration with other universities in the Oregon system as well as with appropriate institutions in

the Northwest and throughout the world. All of these opportunities can be more effectively developed with a more visible, physical presence—an “Oregon State University Office of Outreach and Engagement.”

Recommendations for Action:

6. OSU in Portland

- Establish a consolidated OSU Outreach and Engagement presence in Portland for coherence, impact, and a more significant physical presence.
- Form a strategic partnership with Portland State University.
- Develop a program relationship between Extension and Ecampus focusing on educational needs of the citizens in the greater Portland area:
 - Focus on highly valued educational opportunities that involve collaboration between Extension faculty and Ecampus faculty.
 - Identify and develop a series of formal and informal “urban agriculture/local food system” courses.
 - Identify and develop customized certificate training programs for public and private organizations, involving other colleges and partners.
 - Identify community needs and opportunities that result in funded research efforts by other OSU academic units as a tangible way of expanding the program focus beyond delivering educational programs.

7. OSU and OUS

- Establish an OUS outreach and engagement alliance with all seven presidents and the chancellor.
- Explore specific partnerships with other OUS institutions and community colleges.

8. Define the interface between Outreach and Engagement and the international programs office in global engagement.

Mandate #3: Complete and Fortify the Current Division of Outreach and Engagement^A by Expanding on the Realignment of Cooperative Extension and Extended Campus to Include Engagement Efforts in Other Campus Units

OSU's Ecampus and Extension units are major contributors to the outreach and engagement mission of the University, but they are very different units, with unique cultures, missions, business models, and clientele. The business practices developed by the Ecampus have allowed it to become a responsive and effective unit, with support and respect from its academic colleagues and a national reputation for excellence in distance education. Its success is due in part to the peer-to-peer relationship of its dean with other academic leaders as well as to its relative autonomy in budgeting and decision making and its expertise in electronic program delivery. Extension also brings a unique benefit and a special set of skills to the University through its statewide presence, range of personal and professional partnerships, program opportunities, and availability of content experts. These two units can benefit one another and the University by establishing closer working relationships and, where appropriate, integration of services and administrative functions. Such integration, however, should be implemented only while ensuring that individual units will maintain their successful attributes and unique operating identities.

In addition, these are only two of a number of units that share an outreach and engagement mission. Members of the Commission met with staff from numerous units throughout the University that would logically come under the aegis of the O & E Position. Including more units would strengthen the designation of Outreach and Engagement as an institution-wide entity. Clarifying engagement as scholarship will also add value to the function of engagement and weave it more completely into the fabric of the institution.

Recommendations for Action:

9. Programs of University-Wide Engagement
 - o Organize teams of on- and off-campus faculty around the five University thematic areas. Initial responsibility of these teams is to identify major outreach and engagement opportunities within each thematic area, with active input from community members. This would facilitate building relationships among campus faculty, county faculty, and community members, and serve to advance the mission of the university. Each team should have some formal training in such areas

^A We distinguish the narrowly defined "Division" of Outreach and Engagement (Extension and Extended Campus) from the recommended expanded organizational construct we refer to simply as "Outreach and Engagement."

as team building, project management, community assessment, and engagement scholarship. Team Coordinator/Coach should be paid a stipend.

10. Composition of Outreach and Engagement

- Align within Outreach and Engagement additional units and thrust area, such as P-12, business development, workforce development, OSU-Portland, Sea Grant, and others strongly affiliated with service-learning and international education.

11. Position the Extended Campus and Extension as units within Outreach and Engagement

- Maintain the brand of each unit, building on the unique identity of each.
- Immediately name an Interim CES Director reporting to the O&E Position.
- Immediately name an interim Director (or appropriate title) of Extended Campus reporting to the O&E Position.
- Designate the leader of the Extended Campus to serve on the Provost's Council to maintain strong linkages with the academic deans for program development and delivery,
- Assimilate functions within Extended Campus and Extension for maximum institutional benefit to include
 - Gaining efficiencies through the integration of common functions
 - Streamlining and modernizing business practices
 - Developing budget models to serve the range of programs offered through both units.
- Inculcate within Cooperative Extension Service a modern business model that more effectively taps fees for service, contracts, and other nonfederal and nonstate revenue resources.

12. Development Strategy for Outreach and Engagement

- Assign a development person to Outreach and Engagement to capitalize on relationships and partnerships
- Develop a specific development plan and culture of giving for Cooperative Extension Service alumni. Although CES has a long history of serving individuals and communities throughout Oregon, it does not have a long history in cultivating donors. Doing so could have significant payoff.

13. Extension as Gateway to OSU

- More formally utilize the Cooperative Extension Service as a front door for access to the full resources of OSU by the individuals, communities, and businesses of Oregon. The O&E Position and the CES Director

should purposefully develop relationships with county and campus staff, beginning with those counties and individuals that are ready to collaborate. These relationships should be related to the five thematic areas of the university but grounded in the needs of the community.

Notes

1. Kellogg Commission on the Future of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges. (1999). *Returning to Our Roots: The Engaged Institution*. Washington, DC: National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges. This work lists the seven guiding characteristics of an engaged institution as responsiveness, respect for partners, academic neutrality/objectivity, accessibility, integration, coordination, and resource partnerships.

2. Carnegie Foundation (2007):
<http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/classifications/index.asp?key=1213> "Community engagement describes the collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity."

Commission Members

Dr. Paul H. Gutierrez, New Mexico State University

Dr. Steve Jones, University of Alaska Fairbanks, Commission Chair

Dr. Victor L. Lectenbergl, Purdue University

Dr. Muriel K. Oaks, Washington State University

Dr. Lorilee R. Sandmann, University of Georgia

Dr. Ted Settle, Virginia Tech