

Chair Monroe, Chair Komp and Members of the Committee,

For the record my name is Jeff Dense. I am a Professor of Political Science at Eastern Oregon University, immediate Past President of the EOU Faculty Senate, and am currently serving as the President-Elect of the Oregon University System Interinstitutional Faculty Senate (IFS). I welcome the opportunity to address you today on behalf of IFS on the important topic of higher education governance.

IFS opposes the Amendment to Senate Bill 270 (specifically Section 6(2)(c)) that specify faculty shall be non-voting members of institutional governing boards. IFS believes representation with full voting privileges for faculty is vital to the future of our institutions and, moreover, higher education in Oregon. Faculty members are important stakeholders in a wide range of essential issues affecting our campuses, including curriculum and program approval. By virtue of their expertise and experience, faculty members have the ability to offer unique perspectives and knowledge of potential impacts of institutional board decisions. While IFS recognizes the concern of potential conflicts of interest, this is an inherent issue on any board, whether it is in the business, political or educational sectors. All members of an institutional governing board should be expected to recuse themselves from certain decisions, and to defer to General Counsel when conflicts are less clear.

Allowing faculty members full voting rights on institutional governing boards is reflective of the long established practice of faculty serving on the Oregon State Board of Higher Education. A review of State Board proceedings indicates the indelible contribution faculty members such as Dalton Miller-Jones of Portland State and Rosemary Powers of Eastern Oregon have made to the learned consideration of a wide range of issues effecting higher education. IFS respectfully requests the members of the Joint Ways and Means Committee to consider the inclusion of faculty with full voting privileges on institutional governing boards of Oregon public universities.

IFS would also like to highlight the vast potential for collaboration in the future of higher education in Oregon. The formation of strategic partnerships between public universities and our community college partners to deliver educational programs, in both on-campus and online modalities, streamline time to degree, or serve together on committees, task forces, or a faculty advisory board to HECC: These and other collaborative opportunities will enable us to protect the best interest of our most valuable resource: our students.