

March 15, 2013

House Committee on Higher Education and Workforce Development

Representative Michael Dembrow, Chair

Re: HB 2149      University Governance      Support

My name is Katherine Eaton, and I reside in Eugene. Last year, I attended the majority of discussions by the Special Committee on University Governance. There was the opportunity to listen to the various aspects of institutional boards as presented from the viewpoints of the seven university presidents, faculty members, union and non union staff members, students and the public. The recommendations and findings that emerged from those meetings are generally maintained in HB 2149, all be it greatly amplified.

My perspective comes from several areas – as a retired University of Oregon faculty member, an alumni with two UO degrees, the mother of two UO graduates, one of whom was student body president, and the grandmother of two recent UO grads, and one currently a sophomore. I grew up in the Middle West, attending the University of Minnesota high school and four year institution which had and still has a Board of Regents. One of the many positive things about HB 2149 is the requirement for budget development by the institutional board, but the legislative presentation for funding to be made by the state higher education reviewing body. To this day, in Minnesota, there is the annual angst over UM funding during the legislative session as the Board of Regents debates with the Legislature.

Specifically, these are my comments regarding HB 2149 and public higher education in Oregon.

1. I believe the wider mission of community colleges and universities is sound, but each of the institutions also has a separate mission revolving around its student body and programs and should be allowed to move forward in those directions.

2. I support the establishment of boards of directors for the University of Oregon and Portland State University, with the addition of Oregon State University, and the oversight provisions for OIT and the regional universities.

3. The mandates for cooperation and coordination across the higher education system are critical and the annual review and reporting process has been outlined. Interaction, ideas and interchanges of programs and services must continue.

4. As to the boards of directors, 11 to 15 members gives flexibility to the types of viewpoints and talents that the individual institutions may wish. I do believe, however, that there should be a stipulation concerning students, faculty and staff representation. The numbers may vary in the specific institutions, but their voices should be part of the decision making process.

5. Tuition setting is a sticky wicket. There has to be some balance between the needs of the institutions and the students and families who must pay it. Ideally, the state should be a larger factor in the

equation , but that doesn't seem to be on the near horizon. Using the Portland Consumer Price Index as one of the markers makes sense but the recommended five percent annual rise is troubling, and in on section, the wording is five or more percent.

6. The powers granted to the boards of directors regarding hiring, firing, borrowing, construction of facilities, ownership of land, bonding, and others cover the legal bases. The requirements for reporting to the Oregon Education Investment Board and the Higher Education Coordinating Council are clear, as well as the requirements for inter-institutional cooperation and coordination.

There will be amendments to HB 2149 as it goes through the hearing and discussion process and inter faces with the Senate version. It represents an excellent approach and new direction for Oregon public higher education as we move to a seamless education system. Thank you for this opportunity to comment.