

March 15, 2013

To the Committee:

My sincere thanks to the committee members for the opportunity to testify on the matter of institutional governing boards. I am a professor. Most of us get into this line of work because we have a passion for educating students, exploring a field of study with other adult learners, using the opportunities we've had to open doors for others. I want to spend most of my time focusing on that work. But in order to do it well, I need to be assured that other things will happen first.

I have to know that students will be prepared adequately and then able to gain access to an Oregon university they can afford.

I have to know that full time students are not also trying to hold down full time jobs in order to avoid financing their educations and lives entirely with future debt at exorbitant interest rates.

I need to know that I have a clean, safe, accessible, non-toxic and well lit classroom and office in which to meet those students.

I need to know that the computer system that is so vital to advising and supporting students in their academic lives is functioning, that the data is accurate, all the transcripts properly processed, and that there is someone in the registrar's office or advising office or library or student health center when my students need information or help I can't provide.

And I need to know that my students have effective peer representation, an empowered body to which they can take their complaints, concerns, aspirations, requests, when the faculty and administration either fail to or are not in a position to meet their needs.

As a faculty member, I don't particularly care what entity governs the daily operations of our universities but I do know how critical it is that faculty members, staff members, and students have a strong voice in that oversight. We are the university's stakeholders, first and foremost. We are the keepers of its mission, its messengers.

As a faculty member at WOU, I know that we have grown stronger as our shared governance has grown stronger. I fear that institutional governing boards will corrode some of the high level administrative and faculty collaboration I've observed develop in the Oregon University System and SBHE and lead to greater fragmentation rather than the greater cooperation required for the task ahead of us. I am hopeful that whatever higher education reform brings us, it maintains some of those productive system-wide structures. I regret the additional financial burden institutional boards will inevitably cause for their campuses and therefore for students and taxpayers, no matter how adamantly Presidents may insist it will be offset by additional revenue. But since I am not a university President, I may not have the best vantage point for determining if a local governing board is a good idea for any particular OUS university.