



Southern Oregon University

Date: April 13, 2015

To: Chair Senator Roblan and Members of the Senate Education Committee

cc: Senator Bates, Rep. Buckley

From: William "Bill" D. Thorndike, Jr. , Chair
Southern Oregon University Board of Trustees

Subject: SB 493

On behalf of the Board of Trustees of Southern Oregon University, I write in support of Senate Bill 493.

We firmly support our Board of Trustees having the authority to consider the determination of the Higher Education Coordinating Commission regarding our fulfillment of "conditions." The future of our University's governance should remain in the charge of our Trustees, similar to our public universities who were authorized to establish governing boards without "conditions."

The SOU Governing Board is comprised of competent business leaders who will fulfill their fiduciary responsibility to oversee and sustain our University. Since the majority of our Trustees were confirmed in late September 2014, we have adopted our organizational documents, selected officers and committees, and are conducting regular and special board meetings. Although we are not "official" until July 1, we have endorsed bond measures and tuition rates to the State Board of Higher Education. All this is to say, we are positioned to conduct our business in the same manner as the other five institutions, whose institutional governing boards were not approved with "conditions."

Nonetheless, we take the conditions established by the State Board and the former Governor very seriously. At last week's State Board meeting, President Saigo reported that Southern Oregon University is exceeding the goals in their Retrenchment Plan. We are prepared to transition our assessment and reporting work from OUS to the Higher Education Coordinating Commission. We are confident that SOU will meet and exceed the HECC's expectations.

Our business and community leaders were strong advocates for an institutional governing board at SOU that had top local leaders from business, education and our communities to help guide the vital role our university plays in our region. Our Board is eagerly advancing, and we are fully committed to the destiny of Southern Oregon.

Thank you for your consideration.