

IFS TESTIMONY SB 1538 2/3/2016

To: Senate Education Committee

From: Jeff Dense, President, Interinstitutional Faculty Senate

Re: SB 1538

Chair Roblan and Members of the Committee,

For the record my name is Jeff Dense, President of the Interinstitutional Faculty Senate. We are the duly elected voice of the faculty of Oregon's public universities.

IFS is keenly aware of the circumstances underlying the drafting of SB 1558. We greatly appreciate the attention brought to bear upon the issue of confidentiality of student health records, and moreover the issue of student mental health, by Senators Gelser and Knoop.

The results of the 2015 administration of the National College Health Assessment, conducted by the American College Health Association, highlight the endemic issue of mental health on America's college campuses. Results of the most recent administration of the survey reveal, in the last twelve months-

- 86.7% of respondents felt overwhelmed by all they had to do.
- 65.1% of respondents felt very sad.
- 57.7% of respondents felt overwhelming anxiety.
- 49.5% of respondents felt things were hopeless
- 39.4% of respondents felt overwhelming anger.
- 9.8% of respondents had seriously considered suicide.

Despite these troubling findings, over three-quarters of students' surveyed reported they had neither been diagnosed nor treated for mental illness issues, including anxiety, depression and a wide range of other afflictions in the past twelve, and hence, may potentially fall outside the confines of the privacy oriented provisions of SB 1558. Clearly, mental health on Oregon's college campuses, in tandem with the issue of campus safety as highlighted by the recent tragic events at Umpqua Community College, is an issue in need of being addressed in a compassionate and caring way.

A report by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities highlights the need for "communication and understanding among all higher education stakeholders regarding mental health issues. With communication and understanding, reasonable yet compassionate policies can be crafted and information can be shared as widely as it can *appropriately* and *legally* be shared for the purpose of helping students with mental health issues succeed and thrive to their fullest potential while simultaneously maximizing campus security."

The Interinstitutional Faculty Senate wishes to express its support for HB 1558 and its -2 amendments. However, we feel compelled to highlight not only the need for student privacy, but just as importantly, the need for diagnostic and treatment of mental health issues on our campuses, in order to protect the best interests of our most valuable resource-our students.

Thank you for your time, and I would be glad to answer any questions you may have.