

Oregon TECH
OFFICE OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
3201 Campus Drive, Klamath Falls, OR 97601
541.885.1107 (office) 541.885.1101 (fax) board@oit.edu

April 26, 2021

Chair Dembrow, Vice-Chair Thomsen, and Members of the Committee:

For the record, my name is Jessica Gomez, and I serve as the Chair of the Oregon Institute of Technology Board of Trustees. Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of HB 2472, which would designate Oregon Institute of Technology (Oregon Tech) as Oregon's polytechnic university.

I have served on the Oregon Tech Board of Trustees since its initial founding in 2015. In that time, I have seen the university grow and evolve to meet the needs of Oregon's workforce through new in-demand degree programs, renovated laboratory spaces and a new campus building, increased student scholarships, and expanded university partners. The university has also seen a 10 percent growth in enrollment over the past decade, even an 11 percent increase in first-year students in fall 2020, despite the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic.

In August of 2019, the Oregon Tech Board of Trustees received approval from the Higher Education Coordinating Commission to make alterations to the university's mission statement that better reflect the University's polytechnic nature. In addition, the Board recently adopted a five-year strategic plan to serve as a strategic road map guiding the university forward to best serve its students, community, and the state. This designation from the legislature is one of the key components of both the updated mission statement and five-year strategic plan, better reflecting the university's polytechnic character.

As a CEO of a manufacturing and engineering firm, I know the importance of strong relationships between universities and the local industries they serve. Oregon Tech faculty with strong industry connections have, through their knowledge, directly contributed to the success of our students during their education and when they begin their careers upon graduation. Many of our faculty pursue applied research projects with industry partners and those relationships allow Oregon Tech to offer several unique degree options including Cybersecurity, Population Health Management, and Renewable Energy Engineering.

The passage of HB 2472 celebrates Oregon Tech's origin as a vocational institute to support veterans and its current impact both in rural Oregon and statewide, it recognizes Oregon Tech's recently updated HECC approved mission statement, and demonstrates its unique role in Oregon – delivering high-value careers immediately at graduation, while ensuring affordable and equitable access.

I urge your support for HB 2472, designating Oregon Tech as Oregon's Polytechnic University. Thank you for your time and service to our state and its students.

Sincerely,

Jessica Gomez,
Board Chair

Hands-on education for real-world achievement.