STATUS UPDATE: OUS-HECC TRANSITION EFFORTS

Background on HECC Transition

House Bill 3120 amended the charge of the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC), which was created in the 2011 Legislative Session, and outlined specific duties for the newly constituted commission. The State Board of Higher Education’s HECC Transition Work Group has been working closely with HECC and OUS leadership since fall 2013 on the transition of key functions from the Chancellor’s Office to the HECC. The major categories of responsibilities to transition include academic affairs, budgeting and finance, and capital requests.

The HECC is now charged with making a comprehensive funding request to the Governor for all postsecondary institutions, allocating the appropriation that the legislature makes to these institutions; approving significant changes to academic programs, and; for Oregon’s public universities, approving mission statements and degree programs. Additionally, the HECC also assumes an advisory role with policy matters facing postsecondary institutions.

Academic Program Approval Transition

OUS staff are working currently on a number of activities in preparation for the transfer of academic program approval to HECC which include: transferring OUS program approval policies to the HECC; adapting OUS program approval procedures for HECC; developing the future schedule of Provosts’ Council meetings and deadlines, and updating the program approval process as it transitions from OUS to HECC.

Academic Program Recommendations

The recommended membership of the Provosts’ Council would include provosts from all seven public universities and from Oregon Health & Science University, an Inter-institutional faculty senate representative, an OUS representative (for 2014-15), and a community college representative. The Provosts’ Council would retain the co-chair structure, appointing (with Presidential approval) a new Provost co-chair to begin on July 1, 2014 and a HECC staff member as the second co-chair. It is also recommended that at least a 0.25 FTE support staff be available to assist with the Provosts’ Council meetings and record-keeping.

The OUS-HECC Work Group is also developing a set of questions to help the HECC Commissioners and Executive Director develop principles and considerations for academic program approval for Oregon’s public universities. This includes questions such as: what kinds of programs need HECC approval; the timing of submission and approval; what role the HECC should play in determining the balance of on-site versus online programs; what evidence will expected in areas of quality, need, cost and others as background information for the HECC; what role institutional mission will have in approving programs; the value placed on inter-institutional partnerships in developing new programs; and other questions.

Budget Operations Transition to HECC

There have been a number of continuing activities over recent months to facilitate the transfer to the HECC the responsibility for development of a consolidated state budget request for Oregon’s public universities.
OUS staff have presented budget information at HECC meetings, including RAM line item descriptions; detail on General Fund allocations for FY14 by campus; a comparison of RAM line items from 1999-00 to 2013-14; a five-year history of tuition rates for resident undergraduates by campus; and a twenty-year history of tuition and fees for resident and nonresident, undergraduate and graduate students by campus; and other information.

OUS staff also presented information to the HECC Subcommittee meeting on Achievement Compacts, and Budgets and Funding, including information such as the typical OUS biennial budget development cycle; considerations for the 2015-17 Budget Development; information about the 2013-15 budget process; a budget orientation; tuition buy down information; and the OUS capital project prioritization scoring.

Leadership in the Chancellor’s Office has met with HECC leadership on the 2015-2017 budget development and possible approaches the HECC might take. The Chancellor’s Office has also provided transition briefs on statutory parameters that may affect HECC (likely to be Clinical Legal Education funding and tuition/fee remissions); on Sports Lottery funding and allocation process; the general allotment process; and background and contact information for national surveys (state funding and tuition surveys).

During the legislative session, the Chancellor’s Office is providing the capital request to Ways and Means, with participation of campus representatives.

Continuing transition support from the Chancellor’s Office will include Fiscal Impact Statements; support for HECC with the 2015-2017 budget; “Run the RAM” for FY14 settle-up on General Fund and Tuition Buy Downs and to establish the basis for the 2014-15 General Fund allocations, and providing a baseline from which HECC will then determine actual recommendations/requests. OUS will need to identify specific RAM elements that are affected by the final outcome of the Shared Services entity (such as disposition of IT Fifth Site funding).