Process and Guidelines for ASC Recommendations to the Board

BACKGROUND
In July 2009, the Academic Strategies Committee (ASC) identified 11 priority topics within three broad strategic areas needing particular focus during 2009-10. These broad areas and priority topics, flowing from Board goals, guiding principles, and strategic priorities, include:

1. Mission and portfolio
   - Institution missions
   - Central Oregon higher education
2. Access and student success
   - Latino student success
   - Rural student success
   - Portland area student success
   - Student retention and completion
   - Teacher education
3. Economic development, job creation, and workforce enhancement
   - Globally competitive research
   - Graduate education
   - Sustainability
   - Portland higher education connections to economic development

The Committee turned to existing councils, staff, and other expert sources as “resource teams” to assist in the analysis of these priority topics. In November 2009, the resource teams were given a template for reporting back to ASC on a range of potential action steps that could serve to advance that area. The template provided five categories in which to analyze and test potential actions:

1. Current situation – What is the current state driving the new initiative or action step?
2. Possible with existing resources – Is this action step possible to undertake without additional resources?
3. Can be accomplished with reallocation – Is this action step possible to undertake with a reallocation of existing resources?
4. Requires new funding – Would this action step require new funding to carry out?
5. Supporting information – What information or data are needed to develop this action step or initiative?
With the resource teams’ analysis now nearing completion and as the ASC begins to prepare recommendations to the full Board for future funding and actions in these areas, the process and guidelines described below have been developed to assist in the next steps. As an overarching principle, primary consideration should be given to initiatives and strategies that address multiple topics within or across each of the three broad areas.

**PROCESS**

In January, the ASC received reports on teacher education, globally competitive research, and sustainability; in February, the Committee heard from resource teams focused on student retention, rural student initiatives, and Portland area student access and success. At its March meeting, ASC will receive reports on Latino student success, Central Oregon higher education, and graduate education. By April, analysis and lists of action steps will have been provided for 10 priority topics, with discussion and recommendations regarding the 11th – institution missions – to follow later.

The next step, for ASC consideration at its April 8th meeting, is to narrow the list of possible priority area actions that require new funding to a set that is manageable. After the March 5th ASC meeting, resource teams will reconsider their initial lists in light of ASC discussions, evaluate what they consider to be the most critical and urgent items on the lists, and reduce their lists to no more than three action items. Action items advanced in the areas of globally competitive research, graduate education, sustainability, and Portland higher education connections to economic development will also need to include an estimate of jobs created or workforce capacity increased. Staff will compile these reduced lists and include them in the meeting materials to be sent with the April ASC meeting docket.

At the April 8th meeting, ASC members will review the reduced list – at that point containing up to 30 funding-related action items in total – and will consider which items the Committee wishes to develop further. At the end of the April ASC discussion, the smaller set of action items requiring new funding will be referred back to the resource teams and experts for budget development in the form of a Policy Option Package. Details about what will need to be included in the budget documentation will be provided to resource teams following consultation with the OUS Budget Office.

At the May ASC meeting, Committee members will review all of the information on the potential priority area policy packages, integrating that information with the non-funding related actions previously endorsed by ASC, and approve a set of recommendations for full Board consideration. Recommendations advanced by ASC to the full Board will need to identify the rationale for the action, expected outcomes, performance indicators, budget information (if the action item requires new funding), and preliminary timelines. It will be important to quantify anticipated impacts of the funding-related proposals as much as possible.
GUIDELINES FOR PRIORITY SETTING

At its April discussion, the ASC will need some clear parameters for sorting and filtering the large array of potential action items. In addition to considering the extent to which a potential action addresses multiple priority topics within one of the three broad areas, other considerations could include the following:

1. To what degree would this action serve the Board’s four goals – advancing educational attainment and educational opportunity for Oregonians, ensuring high quality student learning, creating knowledge and advancing innovation, and contributing to the economic, civic, and cultural vitality of Oregon and its communities?

2. Are there existing examples of similar initiatives or actions in this priority area? Have they been successful? In what ways have they shown a return on investment?

3. Does this action or initiative build on existing structure, resources, and excellence?

4. What is the potential for leveraging other funds (federal, private) and pilot projects to accomplish this action?

5. What level of investment would make a difference?

6. What is the likely measurable return on investment?

7. How long would it take to see results?

8. Does this action have clear outcomes that are measurable and over which OUS and its institutions have a large degree of control?

9. Would this action or initiative generate excitement?