Southern Oregon University seeks Board approval to offer an instructional program leading to a B.A./B.S. in Outdoor Adventure Leadership.

SOUTHERN OREGON UNIVERSITY – B.A./B.S. IN OUTDOOR ADVENTURE LEADERSHIP

1. Describe the purpose and relationship of the proposed program to the institution’s mission and strategic plan.

The Outdoor Adventure Leadership (OAL) degree is directly related to Southern Oregon University’s mission statement and strategic plan by providing regional recruits and place-bound students with programming that is unique and reaches and serves a distinct population of students. SOU believes this degree will help them achieve its mission by providing increased practicum/internship and service learning opportunities for students; building partnerships and utilizing their region’s natural resources and in more sustainable ways; and providing well trained professionals for the regional workforce. Further, SOU believes this degree will increase academic distinctiveness and quality; further engage faculty in community college outreach; partner with their newly-formed Center for the Environment; and help achieve enrollment targets, all of which are part of SOU’s strategic plan.

2. What evidence of need does the institution have for the program?

The Department of Health, Physical Education, and Leadership at SOU has extensive evidence of market and program demand through departmental student survey data, and state, regional and national data related to trends and growth in outdoor recreation participation and job opportunities. The data suggest that (a) students strongly desire this program, (b) 61 percent of surveyed students indicated that they had chosen to attend SOU because of the availability and quality of the outdoor recreation opportunities, (c) this field (outdoor recreation) will increase faster than the average of all occupations (according to the U.S. Labor Department), (d) employment projections for recreation workers in Oregon are strong (Oregon Employment Department), and (e) over the past 20 years, the growth and diversification of the recreation industry has been remarkable (Academic Excellence/Economic Development Review). Perhaps SOU’s strongest indicator of need is that they have been successfully offering a concentration and a minor in OAL since winter 2008. In that short amount of time, Southern has over 70 students in both programs (about 50 in the concentration and 20 in the minor).
3. *Are there similar programs in the state? If so, how does the proposed program supplement, complement, or collaborate with those programs?*

Currently OSU-Cascades’ Tourism and Outdoor Leadership program is the only similar program in the state. SOU has been in conversations with them since 2007. The OSU-Cascades’ program emphasizes tourism management, marketing, and ecotourism while the SOU program emphasizes study in outdoor adventure and recreation leadership, programming, planning, and management. Future planning involves SOU’s program to expand in the area of wilderness therapy, an area of focus that Oregon State University does not currently or plan to offer. SOU is already seeing that regional two-year institutions will collaborate with them to support each other’s program offerings. Rogue Community College, Umpqua Community College, and Southwestern Oregon Community College offer coursework in outdoor adventure leadership but do not offer degree programs.

4. *What new resources will be needed initially and on a recurring basis to implement the program? How will the institution provide these resources? What efficiencies or revenue enhancements are achieved with this program, including consolidation or elimination of programs over time, if any?*

The OAL concentration and minor have been financially viable and sustainable over the past two years at near zero cost. SOU has just successfully completed a new hire for fall of 2010 to teach in this program. Library and marketing costs are minimal and SOU has already budgeted for them for next year. Once this becomes a major and Southern can begin planning for the Wilderness Therapy Option in a few years, they may need to add .50 FTE in order to successfully complete accreditation, but this may be achievable through current faculty within the department. As indicated in the OAL proposal, SOU projects total revenues to grow somewhere in the range from $84,240 to $149,000 annually over five years. SOU believes strongly that enrollment will grow once this is approved as a major since many students report that they do not understand the concept of a degree concentration.

All appropriate University committees and the OUS Provosts’ Council have positively reviewed the proposed program.

**RECOMMENDATION TO THE COMMITTEE**

The OUS Provosts’ Council recommends that the Board’s Academic Strategies Committee authorize Southern Oregon University to establish an instructional program leading to a B.A./B.S. in Outdoor Adventure Leadership, effective Fall 2010. Pending Committee approval, a five-year follow-up review of this program will be conducted in 2015-16.

(Committee action required.)