Wilsonville Area Chamber Letter of Support for Oregon Tech board and Presidents’ Council

Oregon State Board of Higher Education
1800 SW 6th Avenue, Suite 520,
Portland State University campus,
Academic and Student Recreation Center,
Portland, OR, 97201

State Board Chair Donegan, and Members of the State Board of Higher Education:

As the President of the Wilsonville Area Chamber of Commerce, representing 572 businesses that employ 12,000 in the South Metro Oregon, I encourage your endorsement of the request for an institutional board for Oregon Institute of Technology (Oregon Tech).

Oregon Tech opened its Wilsonville Campus in the fall of 2012, after consolidating its metro-based operations since 1983 into a single campus location. Oregon Tech and its students, faculty and staff are already having an impact on the city and the region. Oregon Tech has formed partnerships with our regional employers for internships and sponsored projects, hosted community forums on sustainability and energy and convened the South Metro-Salem STEM Partnership, working with 15 school districts in the region, including West Linn-Wilsonville, to catalyze more students to pursue degrees and careers in science, technology, engineering, and math. Since our members are constantly searching for a skilled workforce, we wholeheartedly embrace Oregon Tech’s growth, and support its request for an institutional board that can embrace and enhance its mission.

As part of Oregon Tech’s community outreach regarding governance, the chamber promoted their local community forums through our membership outreach. At the forum, President Maples explained the State Board’s proposed governance options, addressed questions and sought input. At the forum, it was evident that the community’s support would lean in favor of a distinct board for a distinct and unique university, one with a strong teaching and workforce development mission.

We consider Oregon Tech to be an incredible asset in our community that will help the chamber attract and retain companies, provide talent for our member companies and become a robust community partner. Their partnership through student, faculty and staff involvement with chamber companies, the City of Wilsonville strategic committees, and student service projects are valued by all involved.

Wilsonville has a wealth of Fortune 500 companies with campuses in the community. Being less than 20 miles south of Portland with easy access to both Interstate 5 and 205, heavy rail service and no sales tax, Wilsonville has attracted several corporations from Xerox to Tyco. The top 10 private employers are: Xerox Corporation: 1,500 employees that manufacture printers in partnership with 3D Systems; Mentor Graphics: 1,100 high tech professionals that design software that allows companies to develop better electronic products faster and more cost-
effectively; Tyco Electronics: 550 people that manufacture medical products for this global company; Sysco Food Services: 520 employees that help to distribute food products to restaurants, healthcare and educational facilities; FLIR Systems: 440 employees, the world leader in night vision, thermal imaging systems, infrared cameras; Rockwell Collins: 420 employees that design and develop head-up and helmet-mounted displays for commercial and military applications. Like these companies, the chamber sees the value in having a university located in the South Metro area, ready to serve our members, as they cultivate the talent to grow our businesses.

The Wilsonville Area Chamber of Commerce supports Oregon Tech’s request for a governing board that supports the growth and innovation of Oregon Tech, coupled with a Presidents’ Council that helps the university increase efficiencies and provide more regional advocacy and responsiveness. An Oregon Tech University Board, with strong representation of businesses in Wilsonville, as well as other areas of the state and Pacific Northwest will bring focus and local ownership to Oregon’s valued polytechnic university.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Darren Harmon
President
Wilsonville Area Chamber of Commerce

Cc: The Honorable John Kitzhaber