Oregon has established ambitious goals for educating its citizens. By 2025, 40 percent of its young adults should have earned at least a bachelor’s degree, 40 percent should have a recognized postsecondary credential or an associate’s degree, and all of Oregon’s young adults should have earned a high school diploma. Further, these goals must be met for the citizens in each region of the state and those in each income and sociodemographic category. It is the responsibility of the Oregon University System to help the state achieve those goals as well as to help foster an innovative knowledge economy and vibrant communities throughout Oregon.

Each public university, focused on achieving its own mission and doing so in ways that foster its institutional best interest, has a vital role to play in meeting these responsibilities. So, too, does the University System—the entity that is charged with orchestrating the efforts of the universities (each with its own mission and set of programs) to fulfill the public responsibilities expected by the state.

Each university will focus on its role and share of what needs to be achieved. The University System must ensure that the sum total of the work of the universities leads to the achievement of state expectations to meet both the education goals it has set (40 percent with high quality bachelor’s and advanced degrees, equitably shared among regions and populations) and the goals for innovation and community vitality. Because no two universities have the same mission, the aggregation of their efforts to meet statewide goals requires a Systemwide approach.

The roles of a University System include:

a. Speaking with one voice to state policy makers with regard to budgets and policies;  
b. Planning for the future in terms of both capacity to educate students, conduct research, and offer the programs to meet changing social and economic needs;  
c. Guarding against costly unnecessary duplication of programs;  
d. Ensuring the accuracy of data (financial and student) to allow state policy makers to understand if the state is making progress toward its educational goals;  
e. Facilitating cooperation among universities and between universities and other education and research providers to meet the needs of Oregonians (including everything from student transfer policies to shared research projects and facilities);  
f. Ensuring accountability for meeting state goals;  
g. Saving money by providing services to universities in a cost effective and efficient manner that leverages the System’s size to benefit from economies of scale; and
h. Relentlessly focusing on student success.

The Oregon State Board of Higher Education and its Chancellor’s Office currently have these responsibilities. The overall record of achievement of the University System in terms of enrollment, student success, and research has reached its highest level in state history.

Governance—the university system—February 2012