Summary of Discussion
Committee of the Whole
State Board of Higher Education

May 24, 1991 Meeting

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Secretary of the Board

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As members of a Board of a multi-campus system, you have significant responsibility to confront issues that touch all the institutions plus those related to OCATE and other special programs. With a system as large and diverse as the State System, there is always a danger of becoming mired in everyday problems and prisoners to an agenda that others define. I hope that today we can invest time in developing and shaping, in at least a preliminary way, an agenda reflective of the Board’s choices and insights.

It is for you to ask the probing, fundamental questions such as: What are our values? How can we interpret or adapt institutional missions to serve the needs of future students? Is quality improving? Is education priced right? Whom are we admitting and why? How many of those who enter our institutions complete degrees? Do expenditures match priorities? Are we differentiating campus programs adequately to serve the optimal numbers, needs, and interests of students?

Five topics were presented for discussion.

ACCESS AND TUITION

Legislators in Oregon are not interested in, or willing to tolerate, students being turned away, thus leaving policy makers with a set of difficult trade-offs and resource allocation decisions.

How does a situation of open enrollment impact the formulation of tuition and access policies that work well for multiple and varied constituencies?

How much of the cost of instruction should individual students be expected to pay versus what the state invests in direct appropriations?

If we charge more, how do we avoid a tuition-financial aid spiral where increased tuition creates a greater demand for dollars for scholarship funds that must be raised by further increasing tuition?

Access is a correlated issue to tuition policies. How will we meet increased demand for educational services in the next ten years and achieve a benchmark goal of 27 percent of Oregonians 25 years old and older having a bachelor’s degree by the year 2000? Reaching that
goal would exceed current enrollment by 17,000 before experiencing any reductions in enrollments that will be required for fall term, 1991.

Can we continue to operate with serious over-enrollments in many degree programs, with class sizes well above the levels recommended by accreditation standards with an accompanying lack of study space in libraries and computer labs, and with waiting lists for classes required for graduation?

What is the age and socio-economic profile of student bodies? How will that change in the next ten years? Can we use new methods to deliver education to more people with similar levels of resources? What kinds of relationships are possible with independent and community colleges to allow more students to gain post-secondary education?

How can the State System package a working agenda? What are the options for consideration by mid-fall of 1991? For example, what are the policy implications of the model of a high tuition, high financial aid option suggested by George Richardson?

MILLER: What do we want this state to look like relative to educational productivity? We cannot be advocates for higher education if we do not have agreement on this point. How can issues be more narrowly focused to enable productive philosophical discussions?

SWANSON: In studying levels of support for higher education in the states of Washington and California, it is apparent that Oregon is making a real effort to educate more students with fewer resources. Why is it so hard to get that message out to the public in Oregon? Our decisions seem quite clearly drawn: either more money is required to educate students, or fewer students will have access in order to sustain quality programs.

RICHARDSON: We need to have a model that we think would realistically work to achieve the tuition policies we think are important; begin to examine the downsides (such as funding, lack of revenue and resources); and explore options for generating the resources required to sustain a selected model. Are the educational needs of Oregon similar or dissimilar to those of states like Washington or California? How do we collect useful comparative data? Are comparisons the most useful way of approaching this issue.
BARTLETT: It is very instructive to note the strong opposition encountered in the Legislature on reducing enrollment proportional to a reduced budget. We have to look at ways of getting out of the choice of either reducing enrollments or finding increased resources. One option would be greater differentiation among institutions. Another would be an open university concept, such as distant learning as an adjunct to traditional institutions. The State System will need to examine alternative, less costly, approaches to providing higher education opportunities.

DODSON: I have been stunned at how difficult it is to get what I think of as a simple message out to legislators and the general public. The general public sense is that we should continue to do even more with even less. We as a Board must agree on policy directions that support quality education and not get trapped in another incremental stage of reduction and have the public think the Board is happy with the results. We need to create a vision of the future and work toward achieving it. We need to make assumptions about what kind of state we'd like to have and operate on that assumption, rather than having someone else tell us what they want us to be.

BRAND: Oregon is not only the lowest in the PAC-10 on a cost per student basis, but we are the only state in the union that provides more state and public dollars per student to support public education than we do for higher education. Oregon has a long-standing tradition of support for public education (a good one) but one that is not apt to change. For higher education, that means that we must look seriously at alternatives and options for generating new revenue sources.

One approach is to differentiate missions of institutions with accompanying differential pricing structures that take advantage of variable market opportunities.

BAILEY: Is there a way of determining what impact tuition policy decisions have on the "makeup of the student body," since maintaining diversity is a high priority? If tuition policies are structured in the wrong ways, do we force or give the option to more students to go somewhere else?

We may have to offer the State a way to look at education as an opportunity. I agree that we need to dream a little during the next few months. We probably have 15,000 to 20,000 students who, in ten
years, will have to find opportunities elsewhere if we don't do something now.

SWANSON: There is a strong clash between the goal of access and the goal of quality. I believe strongly that a state system of higher education has to provide the opportunity for students to receive an education at a relatively low cost. And otherwise, we might as well not call it a state system but rather a privately funded system of higher education that is tuition driven. Raising tuition to a high level for in-state residents is not the solution because it does two things. First, there has to be a cut-off point for grant-in-aid programs which always seem to aid only a certain segment of the population leaving those just above that segment to struggle even more to assure their children receive an education.

Second and more importantly, the higher we raise tuition to support a state system, the less the citizens of the state and their representatives share any burden to promote, back, and support it. We would be shirking our responsibility if we went to the legislature with a plan that basically said, "Don't worry about us. We'll self-fund." On the other hand, we can't continue to run a State System without enough money to produce quality. We'd better start separating the missions of our colleges and universities, and let them be more entrepreneurial in getting support for their programs, and look at options such as tuition differentials.

BARTLETT: There doesn't seem to be an adequate coupling of what the state ought or wants to be "when it grows up" and an appropriate System of Higher Education to support that. There is a whole set of short-term fixations, but it is hard to think about a higher education system detached from the society out of which it is supposed to grow and to which it should relate. My assumption is that higher education is not just a matter of serving individuals, it is also an institution that serves social purposes. It is very hard to know what we ought to be aspiring to without knowing what the larger objectives are.

BRAND: We cannot conduct business as usual. We have to be realistic and look ten years down the line, even bracketing Measure 5, and be willing to think not in little bits, but in big chunks; determine where our strengths are; the qualities and advantages of our
institutions; and build on them. We have to be willing to be market sensitive and take advantage of strengths.

**LARGE:**

**STRUCTURE AND COST OF ADMINISTRATION**

A proposal has been made to name a working group consisting of three Board members and leaders from the private business sector to identify appropriate structural changes in the State System administration and support services. The working group will ask questions such as:

What administrative activities add value and support to academic goals?

How can the System be organized more simply and with fewer layers of management? How can the role of the Chancellor and Centralized Activities be clarified for internal and external audiences?

What are relevant performance goals?

**BAILEY:**

Discussions on this topic have assumed that the basic structure of the System will remain the same. Therefore, looking at the larger picture, the question is: Do we make any structural changes on a massive scale? Are we talking about things like transferring programs from one institution to another? Or are we talking about tinkering with the system we have?

**DODSON:**

This topic should be narrowly defined. People like to talk about cost-savings and shared administrative functions through strategies like merging institutions. That should be viewed from an academic perspective, keeping the integrity of programs rather than letting administrative structure and cost "wag the dog."

**WILSON:**

This topic is tied to every other one. In preparing for the Renewal, restructuring ties into every other issue.

**BARTLETT:**

As a practical matter, it is better to keep the administrative review topic very narrowly focused. One of our biggest problems is going to be talking about structure, reorganization, and downsizing without it turning into a very destructive process. We need to separate the kind of hard, clear administrative concerns and then deal with the other issues in another way. How do we deal with the next biennial planning process and get by the specter of planning or
beginning to downsize by the summer of 1992?

RICHARDSON: I would urge the staff to begin by presenting us a set of assumptions about the environment that will drive the decisions.

LARGE: PRODUCTIVITY AND FACULTY WORKLOAD

This topic is historically a sensitive one. In response to questions from members of the Education Ways and Means Subcommittee, we provided data on faculty workloads, demonstrating that our faculty work longer hours with fewer resources and lower pay than most of their peers. The message legislators sent back to us was, "Faculty aren't spending enough time in the classroom."

The issues can be framed around several questions:

Do we have an opportunity to develop a system for rewarding faculty for excellence, especially in the area of undergraduate teaching? If so, at what expense to research, scholarship, and service, which are other aspects of our basic mission? To what extent can we use technology to optimize the time of individual faculty members and how can we build an environment in which faculty are encouraged to make use of time-saving technologies?

How can we communicate more clearly with legislators the impact of these activities on the lives of Oregonians? What leadership can we provide in creating, with our faculty, shared values, ideals, and beliefs about productivity? How can we structure the concept of long-term investment in higher education and our faculty for the good of Oregon and Oregonians?

The "two-year horizon" necessitated by the Legislative process makes it difficult to develop long-term investment at the core of our institutions. We must be pushed to think longer-range.

DODSON: Members of the IFS should be included in these discussions and asked to prepare responses to these questions.

DAVIS: I feel strongly that the IFS is a valuable resource to us on these topics.

MILLER: What is the benchmark used to measure productivity? Has it been defined adequately? How can we expect a modern faculty professor to deal with lack of adequate
funding and stay in the lecture hall at the same time? How can we expect a modern professor to deal with the demands for social and economic state-related public service and achieve whatever productivity standards we set? Finally, given the amount of bureaucratic details required from the state and federal government (which require increasing amounts of paperwork) can we expect faculty members to be as productive as they were five, ten, or 15 years ago?

CLARK: These are appropriate questions for the IFS because you are asking questions about the modern faculty member and whether he or she has the tools needed to meet expectations. What constraints do we put on faculty? What tensions are implied in additional involvement in undergraduate teaching at the same time there are higher demands for research and scholarly performance?

BARTLETT: When you think about the differential roles that faculty perform, the individual differences among faculty in teaching, research, and service, undergraduate and graduate teaching, and professional teaching, the different environments -- it is very difficult to generalize the issues of faculty productivity and workload.

WRIGHT: We can provide the Board a "day in the life of faculty member one, two, three. . .:" a typical researcher in the Biology department at the University of Oregon, a typical special education instructor at Western Oregon state College. We could be asked questions like, "What would you do if you had adequate resources?"

BARTLETT: How should we change the "incentive" structures for faculty? What is the best way to balance them, for example, for undergraduate instruction? What would be the best techniques? Would it be to have more differentiation among faculty in the sense that we have researchers, teachers, service people? How do we get incentives for everyone to shift the balance? Is there really a need to shift the incentives? Are the incentives as skewed as the question implies? How does one change the incentive system in a practical way if we make the judgment that undergraduate teaching must be weighted more heavily?

We put pressure on faculty to generate their own resources and that becomes a part of the negative system. What would it be if we move away from that? Would it be providing teaching equipment and supplies?
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Would it be differential evaluations at tenure and promotion time?

DODSON: We have the substantive issue and questions concerning how to incent people. How do we do some very creative thinking about how to provide these incentives? And then, how do we communicate to the Legislature?

BARTLETT: What is the right emphasis in our system among our doctoral level graduate programs, our post-graduate professional schools, and our undergraduate emphasis? We have a very wide range of professional schools and we have maintained those on the assumption that there ought to be a wide range of professional schools available in the state. Is the balance right? Do we have too much capacity for undergraduate education?

LARGE: ASSESSMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

To some extent, higher education is likely to disappoint the public and public policy-makers who want solid proof of better educational results in exchange for higher appropriations. It is a natural, but very difficult question to answer.

There is no consensus on what the outcomes are and no one formula that tells us how we can measure or relate the outputs to the inputs. Can we create a system for collecting and analyzing the data we already have and sharing it with legislators on a regular basis? Should higher education present a report card at each legislative session? Vice Chancellor Clark recently organized a task force to analyze acceptable types of measures.

BAILEY: We need to be careful about falling into the trap of using a numbers game to address this issue. Some things are not quantifiable. If we go back to playing a numbers game where we have so many in this course, and they have some percentage with jobs when they left with their degrees, we miss a big part of our mission.

DODSON: The report card format we used this year didn’t trap us; if anything, it helps us redefine our own assessment and accountability goals in our way rather than getting trapped into measurements that someone else produced or statistics that may otherwise be misleading.
JACKSON: There might be an opportunity to focus attention back to state economic issues and making the link that way.

MILLER: What is the relationship between successful academic completion and the concepts of promotion and tenure evaluations which are more heavily weighted on "publish or perish" criteria?

RAMALEY: The public separates these issues since we place so much emphasis on sponsored research. What we fail to do is look at all the ways in which scholarship is applied to the problems around us that are not always through sponsored funding. We continue to find benchmarks for progress in research that tend to pull it away from what we do in the classroom or in the community-at-large.

BYRNE: John Owen has offered to have Rob Miller sit in on the promotion and tenure meetings at Oregon State University. We do try to evaluate service and teaching as well as scholarship, and I think we do a good job. But this kind of review happens within the academy without any public input or knowledge. Perhaps it would be helpful to have people from outside the academy observe what occurs.

GILBERT: This may be a public relations issue; a lack of communication.

LARGE: EDUCATIONAL REFORM

The issue of educational reform is related to a series of proposals embodied in Representative Vera Katz's proposal. This is at once a local and a national issue receiving a great deal of attention. The Katz plan would require higher education to play a critical role in the development of new curricula and performance tests.

How will we respond in the future to a more highly prepared entering student population? Will undergraduate degree programs take four years to complete? Will that continue to be the model or will that change as a consequence of some of the changes in the public schools? How will we accommodate students as they move back and forth between the tracks suggested in the Bill? How will the State System respond to the need for more vocational and technical educators? Are we capable of doing something quite radical and unorthodox? Should we convene a "think-tank" composed of members of the
Board along with public educators and administrators -- individuals who could think together about how to plan an integrated educational system that will meet the technical and professional workforce needs of Oregon?

**DODSON:** Educational reform and the impacts on both systems will be on the agenda for the joint Boards. We will be exploring how to forge a common agenda.

**BARTLETT:** We are going to get educational reform. One thing that is striking about this reform is the proposal for a "system of education" which, if I understand the proposals, will enable us to have common goals, something we can count on, and to which we can all relate. That is to say, when our students come to us, we will know what they've done. There is a unifying concept of what education ought to consist of that would not vary among 300 school districts. There could be a situation in which we in fact argue over the answers to questions that up to now we've left either unanswered or have answered differently in every district. There are obvious dangers: If you have a single answer and you have that answer wrong, then you've taken a very big risk and lost. As we read the Bill, we should think about the implications of a system that is inter-connected, logical in its relationships and assumptions, and quite unified. One of the things this proposal does is assume away a whole lot of problems. For example, everyone is going to finish the 10th grade and have, at the end of that time, achieved certain levels of proficiency. That assumes away problems like drop-outs and difficulties in getting people up to a certain standard.

**JACKSON:** An additional danger is that this dialogue will be taking place at the particular time when voters are in a mind-set of looking for property tax relief. What might, in principle, be noteworthy goals, might be misinterpreted and mistaken as answers to cost containment issues.