

SOU in Salem: Notes from the Capitol, Week 10

This is a bit different of a report this week. With the March 21 deadline past for scheduling bills for work sessions, the session has moved into a different phase, and our work moves accordingly, and so will what I report on from the past week. With the session more than 1/3 of the way complete, it's time to take some stock on our legislative agenda:

- SOU's policy agenda has moved forward well—even if not in the forms the concepts were introduced.
 - o Universities on local workforce boards: Our proposed amendment to place public universities on each of nine local workforce boards in the state likely is not moving forward, due to a combination of factors. However, the aim of this—to enable SOU to participate locally—is being realized, as SOU has been invited to participate on the Rogue Workforce Partnership.
 - o Our bill introduced by Rep. Paul Evans (HB 3458) to require HECC study its reporting mandates and create a plan to reduce administrative burden, likely is not moving forward, but the provisions and intent are being placed into HB 3206, HECC's "Omnibus Bill" and will include community colleges and other items to be considered by HECC in a comprehensive review of reporting mandates and outcomes.
 - o Our desire to see reform to enable to students to transfer more easily among institutions is being considered in part in several "direct admission" bills; these bills make only minor revisions.
- Our work continues and expands around our budget related proposal: PUSF and OOG funding, SOU's Creative Industries Proposal, and more funding for behavioral health workforce development that will wind up with public universities. And, we will continue to look for ways to ensure SOU leaves the session with a sufficient level of funding to fulfill our mission.
 - o Why is sufficient state funding important?
 - It will allow us to pay our employees a fair and living wage
 - It will allow us to continue student support services so every student has the greatest chance to succeed
 - It will allow SOU and other universities to continue to develop the future talent and workforce our state needs—public universities provide a roughly 8:1 return on investment into the economy for every dollar allocated from Salem
 - It will allow us to keep tuition low, avoiding further "brain drain" from the region and the loss of potential economic benefit

Non-SOU Legislative Agenda Bills of Interest:

o HB 3213 (university foundations being subject to public records laws)—a bill all seven universities are opposed to—has continued to face strong headwinds. The sponsor is reportedly developing amendments to make the bill less objectionable to fellow legislators. We know now that the bill will not proceed as introduced; the question is what will the amendments look like and will they be enough to allow the bill to proceed in a watered-down form.

o HB 2649 (implement the Taiwan student program at TRUs) is moving forward with new language that would provide Representative Evans his desired legislation, while removing the more problematic general language about tuition increases and clarifies that the TRUs may establish fees and tuition levels specifically for students from East Asian countries.

What we are especially focused on:

- April 17-22 Budget Hearings in Salem, where SOU students and other university leaders will present to legislators on the importance of funding for public universities
- April 21 TRU Lobby Day in Salem, where all four TRUs will showcase our value and advocate for resources
- April 25 Ways and Means Road Show attendance at Klamath CC to share our voices with budget writers