

SOU in Salem: Notes from the Capitol, Week 8

We are officially more than 1/3 through the legislative session....the pace is picking up!

Big News:

- Tuesday is behavioral health expansion week in both the House and Senate. On Tuesday morning, we are expecting that Rep Hudson will move the higher ed behavioral health workforce expansion bill out to Ways and Means after adopting our proposed amendments; that afternoon SB 142, which is the Governor's approach and bill, will get a hearing in a Senate committee. OCOP will be providing testimony in support of this bill as well, although our priorities and approaches differ between the two bills.
- Monday will see the release of the Co-Chairs Budget Framework, which we expect to not treat higher education well (and likely will treat a lot of areas poorly); this is particularly due to the federal budget uncertainty and a host of potential scenarios that will remove huge sums of federal money from Oregon's budget. Legislative leadership and the Governor want to be prepared to make cuts should some of the worse scenarios become real.
- The Oregon Council of Presidents met in Salem this past week; presidents interviewed finalists for the position of OCOP Executive Director. After reference checks, we believe that an offer may be made soon, but we will have to wait to see how the process goes before any public announcements can be made.

The Little Things:

- The House Higher Education Committee is more than halfway through its bill set—and they are planning on wrapping up public hearings in the next two weeks. (We have gotten hearings on all of the bills we were looking to advance; the chair has begun the work sessions to move substantive policy bills to the House floor and budget bills to Ways and Means.)

Bills of Interest:

- There are a lot of bills receiving attention right now in the higher ed space. Among them:

o HB 3213, which would subject public university foundations (which are private, non-profit entities) to public records law—this would likely dampen donations and require a lot of time and effort to respond to individual requests that would come. Janet and Marc are working with other government relations and foundation folks to make sure this does not get passed and cause harm.

o HB 2481, which requires universities to ensure at least 65% of all credits are delivered through courses taught by full-time faculty by 2026 and 75% by 2027. There is some consensus by SOU faculty leaders that this would

do more harm than good if passed. Marc spoke with Rep. Evans about this bill today and it appears he is going to pull it from consideration.

Things to consider:

- THANK YOU to the LAT members who helped advise on legislation this week, particularly Teresa, Melissa and Josh. It matters a lot to SOU that we have advice always on bills that affect our institution in different ways, and we always want to have the partners in shared government aligned where possible!

What we are especially focused on:

- Continuing to push SOU's policy bills through the HHEWD Committee
- The publication of the Co-Chairs' Budget Framework on Monday, March 17