

**Academic Plan  
University of Oregon  
October 13, 2009**

**Introduction**

The University of Oregon has a longstanding tradition of excellence and independent-mindedness. We must bring that tradition to bear on our current situation: the environment has changed remarkably over the past decade, and to meet it skillfully, we too must change. The state has largely disinvested from higher education, the public requires heightened accountability from higher education, and advances in technology present opportunities and challenges to our pedagogy and research. It is now time for us to take control of our future. We must plan for the continuing changes in our environment, and above all we must design the University of Oregon that will be a decade hence. We must hold dearly to our values; at the same time we must work together to forge new ways of expressing those values in this new age. This Academic Plan was developed with broad community input, in order to communicate our dreams to ourselves, to candidates for the University Presidency, and to our stakeholders. While this document sets forth a vision, it nonetheless leaves much important work still to do. Implementing the goals presented here will require our additional energies and discussion over the next year. All the same, the vision is where we must start.

**Quintessential Oregon: Our Values, Our Mission**

An academic plan must encapsulate and advance the values that define who we are, and the mission that directs our endeavors. Our quintessential values reflect and complement our core identity as a "liberal education" institution. At the same time, these values both shape and are shaped by our guiding mission as the Association of American Universities member and flagship institution of the Oregon University System.

We view "flagship" as a mission descriptor in the same way that other schools describe themselves as land grant, urban research, or regional. The Oregon University System schools endeavor to accomplish a complex collection of missions. Each contributes to many of these missions, however, the University of Oregon carries a unique responsibility for the state in world-wide competition for excellence in education and research. Our sister institutions also contribute significantly to this endeavor, but it is our primary responsibility to look to this national and international arena.

**Our Values:**

***Liberal Education at Our Core*** – We hold fast to a tradition of higher education that has prevailed in this nation since its very founding: a course of study that is rightly described as "liberal" because it prepares students for full participation as citizens in a free, democratic society, and enables the full development of human potential.

The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) helpfully distinguishes between "liberal arts" (which comprise the familiar disciplinary divisions of the humanities, sciences and social sciences) and the broader category of "liberal education" which may include the professional schools. In their "Statement on Liberal Learning," the AAC&U explains that a liberal education is one "that fosters a well-grounded intellectual resilience, a disposition toward lifelong learning, and an acceptance of responsibility for the ethical consequences of our ideas and actions" ([http://www.aacu.org/About/statements/liberal\\_learning.cfm](http://www.aacu.org/About/statements/liberal_learning.cfm)).

***Academics on a Human Scale*** – We celebrate our position among the smallest public AAU institutions with the capacity to produce research while offering a liberal education that is broad, deep, and comprehensive. The scale of our intellectual enterprise allows for individual and transformative encounters with a diverse world of ideas. We avow our intention to maintain UO academics on this human scale, so that learning and discovery can arise within an intimate residential setting and be fostered by personal interaction within the classroom, the laboratory, the studio, and the field.

***Respectful Stewardship*** – We are guided by the humble recognition that we have been entrusted with human and natural resources that we must sustain and manage for posterity. This sense of stewardship, inspired and renewed by the extraordinary beauty of the region and reflective of the broader public trust extended to us by the state of Oregon, underlies the environmental commitments of many of our colleagues, students and staff. It shapes our research, teaching and our practices. We cherish a campus life and a curriculum that publicly fosters our keen sense of the aesthetic, and champions creative and artistic expression within a rich and beautiful natural environment.

***Institutional Agility / Core Strengths*** – We endeavor to preserve and to foster a flexible institutional structure that serves our goal of being an international center of research, education, professional development and social engagement. We also celebrate the accumulated wisdom and intellectual momentum derived from and forged by the traditional disciplinary structure of the University. Indeed, above all we strive to maintain a balance between two infrastructural values: the commitment to interdisciplinary agility on the one hand, and to the core strengths of disciplinary categories on the other.

***Cooperative Leadership and Community Engagement*** – We are inspired by our University's history and culture of shared faculty governance, and by the collaborative and cooperative spirit it fosters. We promote a campus life that encourages leadership through service, consultation and consensus-building. Recognizing our responsibility to make our scholarship accessible to others, we also embrace active engagement and collaboration with the community and the world around us.

***Resourceful Creativity*** – With ingenuity, creativity, and confidence, we can move mountains. This spirit, shared by our faculty, staff, students, alumni, and donors, is reflected in our University of Oregon motto: *mens agitat molem*. In our research and our teaching, UO scholarship is characterized by a collaborative spirit of practical idealism. Resourceful, distinctive and unconstrained by convention, we critically explore and celebrate our collective cultural and individual diversity. These commitments are a catalyst for human discovery.

## **Our Mission:**

The current Mission Statement for the University of Oregon, ratified by the University Senate in 1995 and reprinted at the end of this Academic Plan, continues to reflect our shared sense of values and purpose. In addition, we offer the following statement of objectives to clarify our defining role within the context of the AAU, Oregon and the Oregon University System.

***A Comprehensive Research University*** – As a comprehensive research university, the University of Oregon is dedicated to the pursuit of excellence and the creation and transfer of knowledge in the liberal arts, the natural and social sciences, and the professions. Each of our academic units is essential to this core mission; from classics to cybernetics, from cytology to concertos, from sociology to sports marketing, our faculty and students aspire to world-class accomplishment.

***Public Partner*** – We understand that we serve the people of Oregon and, even in the face of erratic public support, we are committed to ensuring access to higher education for the state's most promising students regardless of their financial need. In turn, with our help, these students may serve the greater good of the state, the nation, and the world -- just as we strive to do with our basic and applied research.

***Equity and Diversity*** – The shifting demographics of the state of Oregon call to mind the central mission of liberal education in a free and diverse nation: namely, to foster informed, public discussion of matters of genuine concern, enabling individuals to develop their fullest potential within a context that mirrors the full range of persons and perspectives that constitute society. Our state, like our nation, has always been a multicultural body, and our collective history makes evident the necessity for a true multicultural education. The UO thus strives to maintain a diverse and equitable community of discussion governed by principles of inclusion, freedom of thought and freedom of expression. We are committed to fostering an environment that ensures equitable access to the opportunities, benefits and resources of the institution for all, and that fosters curricula and other educational opportunities informed by our commitments to equity and diversity. We likewise commit to an educational excellence mission in which diversity and inclusion are integral. We hereby reaffirm the UO's "Affirmation of Community Standards," widely endorsed by faculty and student governing bodies in 2000 and appended to this document. We further reaffirm the University's Diversity Plan, adopted by the President and ratified by the University Senate in 2006, as the blueprint for our progress in the areas of equity and diversity.

***Oregon's Future*** – We honor our commitment to a bright future by contributing to the economic and human development of Oregon. We educate Oregonians to take leadership roles in business, education, law, arts and multicultural communities across the state, and around the world. The comprehensive excellence of our University serves to attract the best and brightest from around the globe. In their artistic, professional and scholarly achievements our students and faculty serve the state of Oregon within an increasingly global environment. The knowledge created in our academic core furthers humanity's ability to prosper, at peace with our neighbors and our environment.

***Preserving the Past*** – If our accomplishments allow us to envision the brightest of futures it is because we stand, in the words of the well-known phrase, on the shoulders of giants. We

dedicate ourselves to preserving the accumulated wisdom of the world's diverse civilizations. This knowledge, entrusted to us by the past, must also be transmitted by us to posterity. Upon these historic and worthy foundations, we pursue excellence into a future the needs and opportunities of which have yet to be imagined.

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### **Our Current Situation: Opportunities and Challenges**

The academic plan for the University of Oregon should be formulated with a clear understanding of the factors that shape us now and will continue to affect us in the years ahead. How do our current capacities, and the opportunities and challenges that face us, align with our values and our mission? How might we respond to our present situation and navigate our future options in a "distinctively Oregonian" way? How we understand today, and how we meet the opportunities and challenges of tomorrow, will to a significant degree determine what the University of Oregon becomes.

As we consider who we are, and where we find ourselves today, three broad areas of opportunity and challenge emerge. The first of these entails a critical and defining feature of our mission: our status as public partner with the State of Oregon. How will we best express this partnership into the future? A second area of concern involves our core value of liberal education. Within the transformed realities of a twenty-first century world, how will we best provide such an education? Finally, as we look toward our future, how will we best fulfill our foundational mission as a comprehensive research university?

Without presuming to be exhaustive, we offer the following points for consideration.

#### **Public Partner**

A central aspect of our institutional mission is our commitment to serve the people of Oregon. The following are some of the critical factors we must consider as we determine how to meet this commitment in the years ahead.

- Demographic Trends. We are becoming an increasingly diverse state. At least 25% of high school graduates in 2018 will be Latino/a. Many students from each cultural group will be first-generation university students. Diversity, then, is not just an ideal we should foster; it is a reality and an exciting opportunity to broaden the cultural scope of our campus. The impact of this demographic shift will be felt both in our academic programs and on our student-support infrastructure.
- Funding. The University of Oregon has struggled in recent years with the State's disinvestment from higher education. We are increasingly dependent on student tuition and fees, private philanthropy, and government and foundation research funds. All of these sources of funding present challenges as well as opportunities. How do we balance our growing need to fund our instructional mission with tuition revenues while protecting and promoting access, a core mission of the public university? How do we take full advantage of private fundraising to ensure investment in our core academic missions?

How do we adjust to the variability and shifts in government and private research funding?

- Public Perceptions. Perceptions, whether they are accurate or inaccurate, can have a profound impact upon our institution. We need to understand how the citizens of the state view higher education in general, and the University of Oregon in particular. We must take action to shape our image and enhance our reputation. In the contemporary environment, where we are increasingly dependent on student tuition and other private resources, the University must work harder than ever to reach the public. It is up to us to convey our accomplishments and history of academic excellence. Academic programs and research agendas that engage our communities may play an expanding role in our future. However, these must enhance and complement the pure research and the creative and scholarly contributions that are a hallmark of a research university.
- Size and Composition of Student Body. The size and composition of our student body bears directly upon our partnership with the state, involving questions of access as well as our ability to fund our programs in an environment of dwindling public support. We find ourselves in the midst of an enrollment "bump" and are compelled to consider the ideal overall size for our university and the optimal mixture of in-state versus out-of-state students and undergraduate versus graduate students. While some year-to-year fluctuation in student populations that apply and enroll at the UO is inevitable, decisions we make about the size and composition of our student body will greatly impact the programs we can manage, the nature of our faculty, the cost of university instruction, and numerous other issues.
- State-wide Initiatives. With initiatives in Portland and Bend we are able to reach more Oregonians with the unique preparation for leadership roles that our institution provides. This outreach is particularly important in graduate education and continuing education in the professional schools. However, such initiatives also present challenges. For example, increasing expenditures in Portland or Bend could affect the financial and human resources available in Eugene and could lead over time to a gradual shift of the center of gravity for certain programs, particularly those in the professional schools, from the Eugene campus to other locations. This balance must be continually measured for its benefit to our overall mission.

In addition, there are various collaborative efforts and public-private partnerships underway involving other Oregon University System institutions, such as the initiatives supported by the Engineering and Technology Industry Council, the Oregon Innovation Council, and the OUS Research Council. We are helping to lead such statewide initiatives and organizations supporting advanced workforce development and strategic partnerships that amplify our contributions to graduate education, research and its societal applications.

### **Liberal Education for the Twenty-first Century**

The AAC&U defines a liberal education as one that promotes a "grounded intellectual resilience." Such resilience carries with it the expectation of lifelong learning, and the acceptance

of the ethical consequences of one's thoughts and deeds. Our own UO Mission Statement articulates much the same ideal of helping individuals "learn to question critically, think logically, communicate clearly, act creatively, and live ethically." Given the time-honored value of a liberal education in the arts, sciences and professions, how can we best help our students meet the challenges -- economic, cultural, technological and environmental -- of the twenty-first century?

- The Rapidly Evolving World of Work. The tremendous pace of change in our world means that in many instances we may be training students for jobs that we cannot yet even imagine. In today's world, we must ask what abilities and skills are most likely to enable our students to adjust successfully to a future that none of us can foresee. How can we best help our students prepare to live and work in an increasingly pluralistic society and to capitalize on the "resilience" and breadth afforded them by a liberal education?
- Globalization. A platitude though it may be, we do live in a global village. The Internet, ease of global travel, and internationalization of so many institutions, including the University itself, will increasingly lead us to think and engage beyond borders. Our faculty already compete with an international cohort of colleagues. Increasingly, so must our students learn to work comfortably in international settings in order to compete with the best graduates of other AAU schools. Our programs and curricula must present our students with a robust understanding of the world at large, providing opportunities for international study and exchange both abroad and at home.
- Technology. Information technology is critical to the academic work of the university. Whether it is high performance computing, visualization software, communication technologies, groupware and collaborative environments, or digitized collections, information technology will play a vital role in allowing the university to fulfill its mission. Because we have not kept pace with our peers in this area we should increase support for information technology infrastructure, applications, and staff to support the work of research, teaching/learning, and administrative processes. Information technology will be critical in achieving our goals of regional and international outreach in Portland and Bend, and with partners in the Pacific Rim and beyond.

In our use of information technology in teaching/learning we must be sensitive to the value of human interaction that is central to our pedagogy. One of the most important discussions on our campus today involves the appropriate infrastructure and uses of information technology to remain a face-to-face community that values sustained individual attention and human interaction.

- Natural Environment. As we enter the second decade of the twenty-first century, environmental concerns play an ever larger role in local and global public discourse, and are of particular relevance for us, given our commitment to sustaining our natural resources. Moreover, we belong to a distinctive region of the United States: the Pacific Northwest. Our goals and plans should capitalize upon our setting.

## A Comprehensive Research University

We are among the smallest public institutions in the AAU, and the only institution in that elite ranking without colleges of agriculture, engineering or medicine. Our relative smallness inevitably precludes a model of *exhaustive* disciplinary coverage: we cannot meet all the research and educational goals of all our possible constituents, but must instead remain true to the ideal of liberal education, the core that unites the mission of all of our colleges, from Arts and Sciences and the Robert Clark Honors College, to our professional schools of Architecture and Allied Arts, Business, Education, Journalism and Communications, Law, and Music and Dance. How may we maintain and even enhance a uniquely Oregon model of *focused* disciplinary and interdisciplinary coverage?

- Academic and Programmatic Emphasis. Because funding is always limited, difficult programmatic choices are necessary. Can we be outstanding in all fields? If not, which will be our signature programs? Tough decisions will be necessary to take the future into our hands rather than simply waiting for it to happen. At the same time, we cannot forget what we might call a "signature" value: our long-lived tradition of cooperative leadership and engagement. The tough decisions that lie ahead must be forged in community, as we strive for the kind of substantive dialogue and shared decision-making that has defined our sense of community since our founding charter of 1876.
- Internal Funding Models. The choices ahead will entail careful reevaluation of funding streams. The way we fund our programs should be consistent with our priorities. The tensions and challenges posed by various funding models are considerable. While the flow of money should have some relationship to the flow of students, we must maintain our role as educational leaders with a well-developed sense of the programmatic balance a comprehensive research university should preserve.
- Faculty. Faculty expertise and scholarship remain our most significant resource. Competition for the best faculty talent is already very intense, and how well we hire, and retain the best faculty is sure to determine our quality as an institution and our appeal to students. At the same time, with funding and programmatic realities firmly in mind, we must make strategic decisions about the balance between tenure-track faculty, non-tenure track faculty, and our non-faculty, graduate instructors.
- Infrastructure. The physical infrastructure that supports our academic mission can provide the key in balancing institutional agility with core disciplinary strength. The synergies that develop among faculty, students, and staff are shaped by our infrastructure and the atmosphere it creates. Infrastructure refers to the types of buildings we construct, the units and classrooms that are housed within those buildings, the physical relation among buildings on the campus, the technology that connects them, and the green spaces that separate them. The connection between the organization of the space we inhabit and the academic programs we promote is significant and should be the result of careful planning.

## Goals

Building and sustaining excellence in the arts, humanities, social sciences, sciences, and the professions require a clear set of goals that convey what is distinctively Oregon while also staunchly facing a bold set of challenges that will provoke an even bolder array of commitments for faculty, staff, and students. The three goals we offer below, deliberately few in number and strategic in focus, establish a broad framework of investments and commitments that will guide our pursuit of excellence in the next decade. Following each goal, we offer a set of more immediate, specific objectives integral to achieving that goal.

These goals are to be viewed as allied with goals in the University's Diversity Plan and the accompanying unit Strategic Action Plans. Measurables corresponding to the diversity-related items below are found in those plans, evolve annually, and can be viewed at <http://oied.uoregon.edu/page/strategic-diversity-planning>.

### **Goal 1: To Achieve and Sustain AAU Excellence on a Human Scale**

Our first goal is anchored to the University of Oregon's current and distinctive standing as the Oregon University System's flagship institution and only member of the AAU. Our AAU membership is critical to the State of Oregon as it enables a voice in important discussions of the future of research universities nationally and internationally. This goal marks our ongoing commitment to achieve and sustain the excellence embodied and required by AAU standards. However, we also recognize that our academic distinction is singularly and quintessentially Oregon—the "Oregon way" is marked by fierce but respectful independence of thought, a pioneering intellectual and industrious spirit, an unparalleled commitment to rigorous scholarship negotiated by and through an intimate community of scholars, and an institutional flexibility that can render results in a timely manner and, most notably, on a human scale. To achieve and sustain the excellence expected of an AAU institution, while maintaining a human scale and our quintessential identity, we envision a program of managed and marginal growth in line with the following objectives:

**AAU Standards.** Given the AAU's current ranking system, the UO's lack of certain professional schools puts our institution at something of a numerical disadvantage within that elite group. Nonetheless, our membership in the AAU remains an essential marker of our commitment to world-class excellence, and we intend both to guard and to improve the quality of undergraduate and graduate instruction and research by moving towards the AAU average in such measures as class size, library and IT infrastructure, faculty teaching load, student/teacher ratio, salaries, tenure vs. non-tenure-related faculty ratio and scholarly productivity.

**Selective Flagship Institution.** We seek to enhance our flagship status within the Oregon University System by attracting and admitting the most promising undergraduate students from



Oregon's diverse communities, other states, and the world. To this end, we will develop clear, comprehensive, and more selective admission standards that elevate our current admission criteria consistent with our academic mission and our role as the flagship university in the State of Oregon, while at the same time ensuring unbiased assessment of promise from all student groups. We commit to improving our student retention to the extent consistent with our public mission and to graduating most students within four years.

**Access.** We are committed to ensuring full access to the University of Oregon for all qualified Oregon high school students, regardless of financial need. This commitment will require not only sufficient financial aid to meet the full need of Oregonians consistent with the objectives of the Pathway Oregon program, but it will also require a directed effort to identify and address non-financial barriers. These barriers include, for example, first-generation status and English as a second language, which unwittingly limit access of many communities of Oregonians.

**Institution Size.** We intend to increase the size of the incoming freshman class and to grow the campus to a total of 24,000 students (from 20,300 students). This managed and marginal growth will provide the critical mass of students and economic self-sufficiency necessary to achieve the distinctive excellence we envision. We intend, however, to remain one of the smallest public flagship universities in the country, holding fast to our core value of liberal education on a human scale.

**Graduate Students.** We intend to increase the proportion of graduate students (excluding law) from 15 percent to above 19 percent, which is more reflective of our AAU peers. Graduate students enrich both the research and instructional enterprise on campus as they provide the critical support and creative energy that are essential elements of a tier-one research university. In the first place, we intend to develop self-supporting MA programs in the liberal arts, and sciences and the professional schools that expand our ability to address the growing workplace demand for students with graduate training. Even more importantly for our viability as a world-class research institution, we seek to reverse the decline in doctoral student enrollment (down by eight percent since 2003) and reach a stable enrollment of 1500 doctoral students within five years (in Fall 2007 there were approximately 1100 doctoral students).

**Faculty Size and Quality.** Any increase in student numbers must be met by an increase in faculty if we are to preserve our core educational mission -- especially because UO faculty/student ratios are already low, relative to our AAU peers. We seek to increase the number of faculty by 100 to 125 tenure-track faculty lines to accommodate the growth in the number of students, while at the same time enabling strategic investments in areas of instruction and research that will allow us to better serve the public interest as well as enhance our distinctive excellence. We seek to recruit and retain a superb and diverse faculty through competitive salaries, including funding for research and professional support.

**Out-of-State and International Undergraduate Students.** We intend to increase the percentage of out-of-state undergraduate students to 40 percent of the total undergraduate student body. These out-of-state students will help provide greater diversity within our student body and

the economic means to educate more Oregonians. We also intend to increase the number of domestic students from under-represented ethnic and racial groups and to return the international mix of students to pre-9/11 levels of eight percent. This expansion will deepen the diversity of the student body in terms of race, ethnicity, national origin, cultural and religious background, social class, and regional representation. This change in the mix of students will also stabilize the financial position of the institution. In this time of broad state disinvestment in higher education, financial stabilization will foster excellence in research and instruction, and provide increased access for low-income Oregonians.

**Capacity.** We seek to increase the number and quality of classroom and office space across campus, and to upgrade those that have not benefited from the recent and unprecedented campus construction. We intend to dedicate resources to improve classroom and office space in areas that have the greatest potential to improve the teaching mission and external reputation of the institution. At the same time, while increasing the capacity of our physical plant, we must also undertake a parallel expansion and upgrade of our information technology infrastructure. Accordingly, we will form a commission to oversee both the development of our IT infrastructure and the policy for its use. Staff support is critical to delivering excellent research and teaching at a larger size. We must thoughtfully grow the staff to provide this support.

## **Goal 2: To Promote the Cultivation of Intellectual Communities and Virtues**

Our collective commitment is not simply to impart to our graduates the ability to succeed in a purely pecuniary sense. We recognize that the creation, maintenance and transfer of knowledge will not by itself successfully prepare our students for the inevitable changes of a rapidly shifting world. Our students must prepare for an uncertain and unpredictable future; they must be able to adapt to the increasing complexity of a myriad of political, environmental and economic forces, all acting on a global scale. Hence, we work to enable students to pursue a complete life that engages their talents, intellect, and spirit. Our second goal reasserts our commitment to this complete life of the mind, in all its agility and intellectual resilience and breadth. By nurturing a vital intellectual climate dedicated to core disciplinary strengths, interdisciplinary dialogue and global exchange, we will continue to promote the cultivation of intellectual virtues as the underpinning of our teaching, our service and our research.

**Intellectual Climate and Visibility of Scholarship.** We aim to develop multiple strategies (e.g., on-campus summer conferences, sustained signature invited lectureships) to bring nationally recognized scholars and their graduate students to campus and to Oregon. By these means we seek to engage the intellectual discourse and to make visible the scholarly and creative work of our own faculty and graduate students.

**Connected Research.** We are committed to a connected research enterprise that nourishes discipline-based core programs while encouraging the development of interdisciplinary and collaborative research. We will pursue targeted research and innovative initiatives that have exceptional promise to serve Oregon and the nation, engage government-university-industry partnerships, and foster collaborative research and instruction across departments, programs, centers, institutes, and colleges.

**Interdisciplinary Research.** Our capacity to communicate across disciplines is an important strength of our scholastic culture and has resulted in new programs and important publications. We will continue to foster creative, interdisciplinary activities and enhance our reputation as an intellectual community where specialists in different fields work together successfully and without institutional obstacles.

**Internationalization.** The University of Oregon already has a strong commitment to an international curriculum both on and off campus. Moreover, our faculty members carry out rich and diverse research on an international scale. We take pride in our institutional participation and leadership in many international associations. But given our increasingly transnational world, an even stronger commitment is essential. We need faculty and students who are able to research, think, and communicate across cultures. Thus, we aim to increase the number of UO students who study abroad from 25 to 33 percent, and likewise increase the number of faculty teaching abroad. We must, in addition, however, aim not only to "internationalize" our research, courses, and our student body, but actually to be an international institution by facilitating permanent faculty exchange, robust collaborative research efforts, easy accreditation of courses for and from universities abroad, collaborative research, and other modes of intellectual and cultural exchange.

### **Goal 3: To Enroll, Retain and Engage a Diverse Community**

Our 2006 Diversity Plan states, "As members of the University community, we take it upon ourselves to protect and enhance all intellectual discourse and to discharge the obligations such investigation requires of us. To that end, we should constantly work to make ourselves more adept at understanding how race, ethnicity, national origin or citizenship, gender, religious affiliation or background, sexual orientation, gender identity, economic class or status, political affiliation or belief, and ability or disability affect the way we live and learn, so that we are better able to respond to intolerance and prejudice, which violate our purpose and mission. The University will not sacrifice quality for diversity because diversity is an important component of quality and the aspiration to enhance quality is at the heart of our University mission statement itself."

Our final goal is to promote a vibrant community where the wealth of human experience, knowledge and perspective may enrich the collective wisdom and life choices of us all. Such diversity is, indeed, the true brain-trust of higher education. The objectives for this goal comprise a range of tactics designed to ensure our ability to enroll, retain and inspire a student body, and a broader university community, that engages the full range of human life.

**Leadership in Diversity.** We seek to lead in offering a full spectrum of study and research on the past and present interactions of peoples, as well as the future needs of diverse communities to live in mutual respect. As the demographics of the state, region and world continue to change, leadership in building a just and equitable world becomes ever more salient. In order to build a community of scholarly perspectives and ideas drawn from a variety of life experiences, we intend to lead the state and region in the recruitment and retention of students, staff and faculty from diverse backgrounds.

**Undergraduate Retention.** We propose to increase the freshman retention rate from 82 to 90 percent across all student groups. Likewise, we intend to increase the graduation rate of entering undergraduate students from 62 to 70 percent. These objectives will require: (1) a systematic improvement in our efforts to identify and enroll high-achieving students who are initially well-matched to a tier-one research university; (2) a greater dedication to a more personal student experience with a curriculum and campus experience that addresses the needs of high achieving students; (3) a heightened ability to identify students who are at risk and the development of an infrastructure to meet their needs; (4) the provision of regularized and sufficient course offerings to ensure that students can graduate in four years; and (5) enhanced and effective academic advising that provides students with the information and resources they need to navigate academic requirements.

**Graduate Student Recruitment, Retention and Success.** We will ensure the successful recruitment, retention, and training of graduate students by: (a) increasing the level of financial support available to graduate students; (b) providing in-state tuition rates to doctoral students who have successfully completed their first year in residence; (c) extending at least a full-year, research or teaching assistant GTF appointment to doctoral students who have made satisfactory progress; and, where it is practical and desirable, (d) eliminating or significantly reducing the use of 400/500 level courses for graduate programs, and (e) supporting innovations in graduate curricula and programs that meet the changing needs of students.

**High-Achieving Students.** We plan to improve the identification of promising and high-achieving undergraduate and graduate students and in doing so, we declare a university-wide commitment to assist these students in garnering well-deserved national and international recognition such as the Rhodes, Marshall, Truman, Goldwater Scholarships, and National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowships.

**Analyzing Student Experiences.** How the student experience is shaped at the UO should be driven by data and best practices. The Schools and Colleges, Student Affairs, Undergraduate Studies, Graduate Studies, Academic Affairs, Institutional Equity and Diversity, and Institutional Research should actively coordinate participation in the top research consortiums and national surveys. In addition, faculty and staff in the named offices will be charged to develop innovative ways to sample our undergraduate and graduate populations to provide data and information about the students—who they are, what they need, how they will best flourish and learn—and to monitor and recommend improvements in the overall student experience.

**Student Involvement.** Engagement in the broad world of human experience is an essential component of a liberal education. Thus, we aim to strengthen the contributions that student involvement, leadership, student-faculty engagement, and community-service programs make to the overall learning of our students. Currently at 25 percent of the student body, we aim as much as possible to increase undergraduate student involvement in leadership programming, service learning and internships.

**Residential University.** We propose to develop facilities and spaces that enhance the residential quality of the university and complement the academic mission and values of the institution. By increasing our capacity to successfully house and serve students in the campus core and

thoughtfully renovating and constructing the buildings and spaces that enhance the student experience, we will ensure that our students will thrive in the university environment.

**Strategic State-wide Initiatives.** We seek to develop a strategic plan for academic and research programs in Portland, Bend, and other locales in Oregon with the explicit objectives of meeting our broad educational mission and adding value to the University as a whole, while serving the specific needs of Oregonians. Explicit consideration will be given to the tradeoffs of directing resources to these state-wide and regional initiatives and away from the home campus. Thus, the initiatives will not simply duplicate activities on the home campus, but rather supplement our teaching and research agendas with programs tailored for the local environment and meeting educational needs.

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## Strategy

To carry out our mission and to attain the goals described herein, we will employ a strategy of excellence, differentiation and focus. As we move forward in our funding choices, we will need to select a unique and coherent set of concentrations in order to assemble the critical mass to be excellent, with the agility to remain innovative and relevant. We will be big enough to be great, and small enough to be greater.

The University of Oregon consists of eight schools and colleges representing a letters and sciences core expressed through liberal arts and related professions: architecture and the arts, business, education, journalism, music and dance, and law. This focus enables rapid collaboration within a common understanding of our central values and virtues. Our strategy is to have the infrastructure and research expertise that no small liberal arts college can offer, yet be more coherent and nimble than an exhaustively comprehensive university like the largest of our sister AAU public institutions.

We commit to excellence in all we do. Our focus allows us to reach for this goal despite limited resources. We will align our multiple resource streams -- tuition, philanthropy, grants and contracts, and state appropriation -- to compete at the international level consistent with our AAU standing.

Yet with our resource constraints, we cannot move all parts of the University forward at the same pace. Our strategy takes advantage of our coherence and nimbleness to focus on a few areas, drive them to prominence, and then refocus while the initial areas maintain, if not improve their stature. We will repeat this process indefinitely, using a strategy of *phased focus*.

The accumulated wisdom and intellectual momentum derived from the traditional disciplinary structure of the University is crucial to our values and mission, and we affirm the importance of building and maintaining that structure. However, to capture the intellectual curiosity of potential donors, potential students, the legislature and the people of Oregon, we need to articulate our mission in a language that inspires with immediate relevance. Hence, focus areas are crafted as

interdisciplinary themes that each touch multiple areas of the University. These "*Big Ideas*" are designed to relate the intellectual endeavors of our faculty and students to their potential influence on the lives of the people of Oregon and beyond.

### **Exploitation vs. Exploration**

For phased focus to produce uniform excellence at the University of Oregon over the long term, we must engage in two parallel processes. We must both (a) exploit current strengths to make that final push to prominence, and (b) explore new strengths and big ideas that are candidates for focus in the next phase. While resource allocation is focused on the current strengths, a seed program must be developed to enhance exploration.

### **Resource Focus**

Each Big Idea must develop a funding model consistent with its relationship to our mission. Some may appeal to donors and rely on philanthropy to sustain excellence. Others may rely on external grants and contracts. Yet others may attract a new group of students to the University and base their funding on tuition revenues. Most resource models will likely include a mixture of sources.

### **Examples**

During the blog discussion, on the order of 40 Big Ideas were proposed. We will soon begin the process of refining and selecting Big Ideas according to the process below.

### **Process**

The first set of foci will be chosen in late Winter 2009. This will require a more formalized and systematic process in the next months to solicit, review and prioritize proposals responsive to the academic plan and associated criteria. Beyond that, we will annually review progress and cull unsuccessful foci in favor of emerging ideas. After three to five years, it is expected that an area of focus will be sufficiently advanced in its process of development, and will be able stand on its own without continued focused investment. New foci will be selected and the process repeated.

Criteria for selection of foci have been discussed on the academic plan blog. A current set under discussion include:

- Aligns with UO's mission and goals noted above
- Builds on existing UO academic and disciplinary strengths
- Demonstrates a "critical mass" of faculty interest and participation
- Fosters new cross-institutional collaboration and partnerships
- Supports strengthening of some existing disciplines
- Links to fundamental societal challenges and needs
- Benefits can be accessed and communicated
- Has a funding model from some combination of fund-raising, tuition and/or grant and contracts.
- Sustainable beyond the three to five year "focus phase"

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### **Conclusion**

This document is the result of an ongoing and robust process of debate and exchange in the University community. It represents the work and ideas of many individuals and sets forth the aspirations of the University of Oregon scholarly community for the ten year period 2009-2019. We have outlined above the values and mission that make us "quintessentially Oregon." We have described both the strengths and challenges of our current situation, and the goals we will achieve during this period. Finally, we have laid out a strategy of excellence, differentiation and phased focus that will take us into the future.

### **University of Oregon Mission Statement**

The University of Oregon is a comprehensive research university that serves its students and the people of Oregon, the nation, and the world through the creation and transfer of knowledge in the liberal arts, the natural and social sciences, and the professions. It is the Association of American Universities flagship institution of the Oregon University System.

The university is a community of scholars dedicated to the highest standards of academic inquiry, learning, and service. Recognizing that knowledge is the fundamental wealth of civilization, the university strives to enrich the public that sustains it through

- a commitment to undergraduate education, with a goal of helping the individual learn to question critically, think logically, communicate clearly, act creatively, and live ethically
- a commitment to graduate education to develop creators and innovators who will generate new knowledge and shape experience for the benefit of humanity
- a recognition that research, both basic and applied, is essential to the intellectual health of the university, as well as to the enrichment of the lives of Oregonians, by energizing the state's economic, cultural, and political structure
- the establishment of a framework for lifelong learning that leads to productive careers and to the enduring joy of inquiry
- the integration of teaching, research, and service as mutually enriching enterprises that together accomplish the university's mission and support its spirit of community
- the acceptance of the challenge of an evolving social, political, and technological environment by welcoming and guiding change rather than reacting to it
- a dedication to the principles of equality of opportunity and freedom from unfair discrimination for all members of the university community and an acceptance of true diversity as an affirmation of individual identity within a welcoming community
- a commitment to international awareness and understanding, and to the development of a faculty and student body that are capable of participating effectively in a global society
- the conviction that freedom of thought and expression is the bedrock principle on which university activity is based
- the cultivation of an attitude toward citizenship that fosters a caring, supportive atmosphere on campus and the wise exercise of civic responsibilities and individual judgment throughout life
- a continuing commitment to affordable public higher education



### **University of Oregon Affirmation of Community Standards**

The University of Oregon community is dedicated to the advancement of knowledge and the development of integrity. In order to thrive and excel, this community must preserve the freedom of thought and expression of all its members. The University of Oregon has a long and illustrious history in the area of academic freedom and freedom of speech. A culture of respect that honors the rights, safety, dignity and worth of every individual is essential to preserve such freedom. We affirm our respect for the rights and well-being of all members.

We further affirm our commitment to:

- Respect the dignity and essential worth of all individuals.
- Promote a culture of respect throughout the University community.
- Respect the privacy, property, and freedom of others.
- Reject bigotry, discrimination, violence, or intimidation of any kind.
- Practice personal and academic integrity and expect it from others
- Promote the diversity of opinions, ideas and backgrounds which is the lifeblood of the university.