

# **Joint Task Force on Student Success for Underrepresented Students in Higher Education**

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**Meeting Summary – Ashland Field Trips  
July 20, 2022**

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## **Community Leaders Roundtable**

**Southern Oregon University  
Stevenson Union, Rogue River Room  
1118 Siskiyou Blvd  
Ashland, OR 97520**

**Members Present: Rep. Alonso Leon, Chair; Sen. Dembrow; Sen. Wagner; Sen. Frederick, ex-officio**

**Members Excused: Rep. Owens; Rep. Ruiz; Rep. Zika; Sen. Findley; Sen. Robinson**

**Non-Member legislators present: Rep. Marsh**

The task force met with local campus and community leaders in a roundtable discussion format. Rep. Alonso Leon, Chair, and SOU President Richard Bailey jointly greeted the attendees and explained the meeting format. Rep. Alonso Leon, Chair, then began discussion by asking what each of the participants' organizations was doing to promote student success for underrepresented students in higher education settings. Discussion touched on the following topics:

- the proportion of Oregon high school students who continue on to higher education;
- Oregon's workforce needs in the coming years, including credentialing requirements for high-paying jobs;
- trauma-informed practices, cultural competency, and multilingual support in providing behavioral health and other student support services;
- the needs of Oregon's educator workforce, including addressing burnout, the COVID-19 pandemic, demographic shifts, state content standards, and licensure;
- mentorship in middle schools to guide students on a path toward higher education;
- data-sharing agreements between K-12 districts and higher education institutions;
- the impact of the 2020 wildfires on the communities of Southern Oregon;
- simplifying the process of transferring academic credit;
- the value of summer programs for new students, such as Summer Bridge and Strong Start;

- predictors of student success early in students' educational careers;
- proactive parent and family engagement, particularly with communities of color; and
- the importance of adopting an equity lens at the institutional level.

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## **Faculty and Staff Roundtable**

**Southern Oregon University  
Stevenson Union, Rogue River Room  
1118 Siskiyou Blvd  
Ashland, OR 97520**

**Members Present: Rep. Alonso Leon, Chair; Sen. Dembrow; Sen. Wagner; Sen. Frederick, ex-officio**

**Members Excused: Rep. Owens; Rep. Ruiz; Rep. Zika; Sen. Findley; Sen. Robinson**

**Non-Member legislators present: Rep. Marsh**

The task force met with faculty and staff of Southern Oregon University in a roundtable discussion format. Rep. Alonso Leon, Chair, greeted the attendees and asked how each participants' perspective on working with students helped their understanding of how to promote student success for underrepresented students. Discussion touched on the following topics:

- increasing student debt as a result of gradual disinvestment in public higher education;
- a historical lack of focus on student success in lieu of enrollment;
- the relationship between affordability and time to completion of a degree or certificate;
- the relative purchasing power of veterans' benefits such as the G.I. Bill;
- declining participation in scholarly honors societies as a function of faculty workload;
- student-to-counselor ratios and utilization of services available on campus;
- access to health services for students;
- the importance of cultural competency in offering support services to students;
- high debt loads causing students to choose degrees that offer more lucrative career opportunities;
- challenges of taking advantage of the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program;
- challenges faced by students, including homelessness, the cost of childcare, the impact of COVID-19, and the 2020 wildfires;
- the importance of athletics programs in attracting multiple generations of students;

- additional burdens placed on faculty and staff of color;
- barriers created by academic holds; and
- whether the FAFSA should be required as a requirement to graduate from high school.

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## **Student Listening Session**

**Southern Oregon University  
Stevenson Union, Room 202  
1118 Siskiyou Blvd  
Ashland, OR 97520**

**Members Present: Rep. Alonso Leon, Chair; Sen. Dembrow; Sen. Wagner; Sen. Robinson; Sen. Frederick, ex-officio**

**Members Excused: Rep. Owens; Rep. Ruiz; Rep. Zika; Sen. Findley**

**Other legislators present: None**

15 students from Southern Oregon University attended the listening session. Rep. Alonso Leon, Chair, welcomed the students and task force members and explained the meeting's purpose and structure. Task force members sat individually at tables with groups of three or four students. The students described their educational experiences and responded to questions from the committee members. Approximately every 30 minutes, task force members moved to new tables to talk with different groups of students.

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## **Site Tour**

**Southern Oregon University  
1118 Siskiyou Blvd  
Ashland, OR 97520**

**Members Present: Rep. Alonso Leon, Chair; Sen. Dembrow; Sen. Wagner; Sen. Frederick, ex-officio**

**Members Excused: Rep. Owens; Rep. Ruiz; Rep. Zika; Sen. Findley; Sen. Robinson**

**Other legislators present: None**

The task force embarked on a tour of several facilities on the Southern Oregon University campus. The tour began with a visit to the Social Justice Equity Center, presented by Marvin Woodard. Next, the task force visited the campus food pantry, presented by Frankie Mora. Lastly, the task force visited the arts studio in the Marion Ady Building, presented by Prof. Bren Florendo and a group of students, in a Native

American Studies drum creation class, which is part of the Konaway Youth Program. The task force members also discussed pre-college programs, student engagement, and a variety of funding sources for the programs displayed on the tour.

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