

HB 2715 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

House Committee On Higher Education and Workforce Development

Prepared By: Ellen O'Brien, LPRO Analyst

Meeting Dates: 3/6

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

The measure permits Oregon's three regional universities to offer Doctor of Philosophy degrees (PhDs), in addition to other graduate programs such as master's degrees and professional doctoral degrees. It limits the number of doctoral programs that the state's four technical and regional universities may offer to five each until 2044. The measure also prohibits the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) or other state agencies from using public funding for scholarships or other financial aid at higher education institutions that offer coursework primarily online and have been found to have engaged in fraudulent or predatory practices.

FISCAL: May have fiscal impact, but no statement yet issued.

REVENUE: May have revenue impact, but no statement yet issued.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

Of the seven public universities in the state of Oregon, four - Oregon Institute of Technology (OIT), Southern Oregon University (SOU), Eastern Oregon University (EOU), and Western Oregon University (WOU) - are colloquially referred to as the state's technical and regional universities (TRUs). In 1997, SOU, EOU, and WOU were collectively converted from state colleges to 'comprehensive' universities offering baccalaureate degrees through master's degrees ([House Bill 2364 \(1997\)](#)). Today, they remain distinct from Portland State University, the University of Oregon, Oregon State University, and OIT in that they are limited to offering baccalaureate through professional doctoral degrees, but not Doctor of Philosophy degrees (PhDs) under ORS 352.011.

According to HECC, WOU received approval from the commission to offer a Doctorate in Physical Therapy (DPT) in 2021 and an Occupational Therapy Doctorate (OTD) in 2022. EOU and SOU have not received approval to offer any approved professional doctoral degrees.

The HECC is required under ORS 348.603 to terminate terminate both substandard or fraudulent degree activities and any activities of diploma mills operating in or from Oregon. Under ORS 348.594, the definition of diploma mill includes any school that a court or body has been found to have engaged in dishonest, fraudulent, or deceptive practices related to the award of degrees, academic standards, or student learning requirements. These laws were originally passed by the Legislative Assembly in 2007 as [Senate Bill 198 \(2007\)](#).