



Feb. 14, 2025

The Honorable Members of the Oregon State Senate
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

To The Senate:

I am honored to write in support of Senate Concurrent Resolution 7, honoring the life and legacy of Pacific University's 16th president, Dr. Phil Creighton. I am grateful to Sen. Janeen Sollman for introducing this bill.

This year, Pacific University celebrates its 175th anniversary of helping students discover their purpose. I believe that we would not have reached this milestone without Phil Creighton's leadership and vision during his six-year tenure from 2003 to 2009.

Under his leadership, Pacific University grew from a small, liberal arts institution into one of the region's top comprehensive universities. His vision and drive led to the construction of six buildings and one of the most prosperous financial periods in the university's history.

Among the capital projects completed during his tenure include the construction of two academic buildings on the Forest Grove Campus: the Tim & Cathy Tran Library and Berglund Hall, along with two residence halls, Burlingham Hall and Gilbert Hall.

Citing a need to provide greater space and improved facilities for the university's growing athletic program (which now totals over 600 student-athletes), Phil Creighton developed a partnership with the City of Forest Grove that transformed Lincoln Park, adjacent to the Forest Grove Campus, into a first-class outdoor athletic complex. The Lincoln Park Athletic Complex has benefitted both the university and the greater community since its opening in 2008.

The crowning achievement of Phil Creighton's tenure is the expansion of the university's healthcare programs and the development of Pacific's Hillsboro Campus. He oversaw the creation of the university's College of Health Professions and the development of graduate health profession programs in dental hygiene studies, pharmacy and healthcare administration. The first building of the Hillsboro Campus opened in 2006 and was named Creighton Hall, in Phil's honor, upon his retirement.

With higher education facing a crisis nationwide in terms of dropping enrollment, increasing tuition and operating costs and a general distrust by some segments of the community, I am convinced that Phil Creighton's vision for growth and stability has set up Pacific University to thrive into the next 175 years.

My personal history with Phil Creighton goes beyond Pacific. It began in 1998 when I was the news director for a radio station in La Grande, where he had just started as president of Eastern Oregon University. His easy-going personality and vision for growth was apparent in my interviews with him.

His five-year tenure in La Grande included the construction of the EOU Science Center and additions of undergraduate programs in computer science, gender studies, biochemistry and media arts, as well as a master's program in business administration. Phil also realized an increase of enrollment from 3,500 students at the beginning of his tenure to 4,200 at the end.

One of Phil's more endearing qualities was his ability to seemingly remember anyone. This astonished me when he became president at Pacific in 2003, five years after we first met. I had left La Grande in 1999 to become Pacific's sports information director. At a meet-and-greet for faculty and staff soon after he started, a professor went to introduce me to Phil. His response was classic: "We go way back." He remembered me even though we had only met two or three times, five years prior.

It wasn't an act. Phil seemed to remember everyone and he was genuinely interested in getting to know as many people as he could. That included staff, faculty and students alike. He regularly dined in the University Center so that he could visit with students and find out more about their experience. He never lost his curiosity in and his love for the people that make Pacific University such a special place. He was as passionate about seeing each individual thrive as he was for seeing the institution thrive.

One of my last interactions with Phil came five years ago. A member of the Rotary Club of Forest Grove while he was president, our club had sung the Scottish song Loch Lomond during one of our meetings. Anyone who knew Phil knew how proud he was his Scottish roots and I messaged him because it immediately reminded me of him.

"You brought tears to my eyes at the mere mention of Loch Lomond!" Phil said. "We are full timers in Arizona now. Please come for a visit." I know his response was genuine.

This resolution would not only honor a dynamic higher education leader. It would honor a person who always made the people he was around feel special. We need more of those people, especially these days. I encourage the Senate's approval of this resolution.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Blake Timm". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Blake Timm
Associate Director of Communications, Pacific University