



President Jesse Petters Testimony on HB 2458
House Higher Education and Workforce Development Committee
March 11, 2025

Chair Hudson, Vice-Chairs Fragala and Harbick, and members of the Committee, my name is Dr. Jesse Peters, and I am the President of Western Oregon University. I want to thank Representative Evans for introducing this bill.

I recognize that most of the asks heard by the Legislature are related to funding. And yes, this is a challenging moment for Higher Education in the State of Oregon and nationally. Delivering a quality education costs more today than 10 years ago, and these increased costs are not simply because the needs of our students are greater, which in many cases they are. Over the last decade, employee salaries, health care coverage, retirement benefits, and the costs of goods have all increased dramatically. HB 2458, however, is not about additional funding but about helping us be more efficient with the money already allocated to public universities.

There are over 150 mandates required by the state that each public university must comply with – some requiring multiple reports to the Higher Education Coordinating Commission; some universities have even more reports that apply to their specific institutions. This, in addition to the more than 400 federal mandates imposed on public universities, has caused a substantial burden.

Just as tax credits are required to undergo review periodically or risk sunset, the time has now come to reassess the reporting requirements placed on universities. How many of these reports are reviewed by the HECC or the Legislature? Are these reporting requirements at the right frequencies to truly measure progress? What substantive actions has the HECC taken based on these reports? Or are these mandates, some of which are a decade or older, just requiring the universities to develop reports that sit on a shelf?

I want to emphasize that Oregon's public universities are committed to being accountable for the public investment in our institutions. We are committed to holding ourselves to the highest standard while also offering a learning environment where every student feels safe, welcomed, valued, and has the opportunity to not only succeed, but to thrive.

However, with the regulatory burden increasing over time from the state level – and uncertainty for public higher education support at the federal level, now is the time for the state to do more to reduce redundant reporting mandates that have outlived their usefulness.

It is important to note that if the Legislature proposed an agency to develop a new study or report, state agencies have the luxury of issuing a fiscal that would ask for hundreds of thousands of dollars of additional resources to hire additional staff to do that work. The public universities have no such luxury.

Office of the President



In fact, in my roughly three years as president, we have faced multiple budget reductions that have led to numerous positions eliminated, putting additional workload on existing staff and making our operations as lean and efficient as possible. We have little capacity left.

The HECC acknowledged in their testimony on HB 2458 that universities may be required to meet outdated and duplicative reporting requirements. Such requirements are, in their words, “significant drivers of time and cost.”

HB 2458 calls for an inventory of reporting requirements and a plan by the HECC to reduce the burden placed by unneeded or duplicative reporting requirements by September 2026. Western Oregon University believes this is a reasonable time frame for the HECC to complete this work. We look forward to working with the HECC team and the other public universities to review current reporting mandates imposed on universities.

Thank you for your time and your consideration. Feel free to reach out if you have any questions.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jesse Peters".

Dr. Jesse Peters
President
Western Oregon University