



## Board of Trustee Report

### Academic Affairs

May 2025

Jose E. Coll, Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs

## **INSTITUTIONAL SUSTAINABILITY**

Goal: Enhance the financial stability and sustainability of the institution through strategic financial planning, responsible resource allocation, and innovative revenue-generation initiatives, ensuring long-term resilience and success.

### 1. Exploring new and much needed revenue:

Academic Affairs will begin exploring the development of a Center for Continuing Education designed to address regional workforce demands while generating new revenue streams for the university and colleges. This center will offer innovative, non-degree programs, certificates, and professional development opportunities tailored to the evolving needs of local industries and communities. By aligning educational offerings with labor market trends and partnering with regional agencies, the center will serve as a dynamic hub for lifelong learning and workforce advancement. A dedicated Director of Continuing Education will lead the center, collaborating closely with WOU's colleges and external stakeholders to ensure programs are relevant, responsive, and strategically aligned with both institutional goals and community needs.

## **STUDENT SUCCESS**

Goal: Enhance degree completion rates for undergraduate, graduate, and transfer students, through strategic initiatives focused on academic support, streamlined pathways, and the necessary services that ensure timely and successful attainment of their educational goals.

### **Activities & Accomplishments**

The positive trends in Academic Affairs reflect the institution's strategic efforts to improve student enrollment, retention, and overall engagement. These initiatives are aligning well with our broader goals of increasing accessibility, promoting diversity, and enhancing the student experience. Here's an update on some key developments:

#### Increase in Applications and Admits for Fall 2025

1. Application Growth: Applications for the entering class of Fall 2025 have risen by 26% year over year, which reflects the success of the recent changes in our



- admissions process.
2. Admit Growth: Admits for Fall 2025 have also increased by 25% year over year, reflecting strong interest in WOU from qualified prospective students. This growth shows that more students are finding value in the programs and opportunities we offer.
  3. Improved Term-to-Term Persistence Fall 2024 Cohort Retention: Early data shows that our term-to-term persistence rate for the Fall 2024 cohort has improved by over 4%, with 93% of students who enrolled in Fall 2024 returning for Winter term and nearly 86% returning for Spring 2025. This is significant year over year growth and indicates that our retention strategies, academic support services, and student engagement initiatives are having a positive impact on student success.

## **TRANSFORMATIONAL DIVERSITY**

Goal: Foster an inclusive educational, living, and work environment at Western Oregon University, ensuring that students and employees feel a profound sense of belonging and have abundant opportunities for growth and success.

### **Activities & Accomplishments**

Academic Affairs is committed to fostering an inclusive educational, living, and work environment where all feel a deep sense of belonging. We continue to support faculty and leadership development by providing meaningful opportunities for professional growth, collaboration, and advancement—ensuring that every member of our community is empowered to thrive and contribute to WOU’s mission of excellence and equity.

1. Judy Sylva, Associate Provost, and Chelle Batchelor, Dean of Library Science, will participate in the Western Academic Leadership Academy—a year-long professional development program designed for academic leaders aspiring to become chief academic officers in the WICHE region. Sponsored by the Western Academic Leadership Forum and the Western Alliance of Community College Academic Leaders, the Academy aims to cultivate the next generation of academic leadership by strengthening the knowledge and skills of those positioned to advance into senior leadership roles.
2. This summer, Academic Affairs—through the Associate Provost’s Office and in partnership with our Title III grant—is investing in SCUP Faculty Fellows by supporting a select group of faculty and staff to attend and present at the Society



for College and University Planning (SCUP). As a nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing integrated planning in higher education, SCUP offers valuable professional development, strategic networking, and resources that help institutions align academic, financial, and physical planning. Participation in SCUP will connect WOU faculty and staff with strategic thinkers and planners across the sector, fostering collaboration and strengthening our institutional capacity for sustainable, inclusive growth that centers on student success and belonging.

3. In recognizing our many faculty and staff accomplishments which are the cornerstone of what makes our community remarkable - we have included in this document this year's nominees for the Mario & Alma Pastega Awards, which represent WOU's highest recognition for faculty and staff excellence. Established in 1985 through the generosity of Oregon philanthropist Mario Pastega, these awards honor outstanding contributions in teaching, research, service, and staff performance. Each year, recipients are selected through a nomination process involving colleagues, students, and past awardees, with final approval by the university president. The awards celebrate individuals who exemplify dedication to the university's mission and values.

For 2025, Western Oregon University honored the following individuals:

- **Excellence in Teaching:** Dr. Amy Dawson, Assistant Professor of Biology, and Dr. Mike LeMaster, Professor of Biology, recognized for their exceptional teaching and student engagement.
- **Excellence in Research:** Dr. Jaime Marroquín, Professor of Spanish, acknowledged for significant scholarly contributions.
- **Excellence in Service:** Camila Gabaldón, Systems & Collection Development Librarian and Library Professor, honored for outstanding service to the university.
- **Staff Excellence:** Cara Groshong, Operations and Finance Director for the WOU Foundation, recognized for exceptional staff performance.

These awards underscore the university's commitment to recognizing and celebrating the achievements of its faculty and staff and their overall commitment to our community and student success.

4. The College of Education is proud to announce Dr. Kenneth Carano as the T.H. Gentle Professor of Education for 2025–2026. A leader in social studies education, Dr. Carano will use this endowed professorship to promote equity



by amplifying Latinè voices in K–12 curricula and creating open-source teaching resources. His work supports WOU’s commitment to inclusion, student success, and community impact.

## **COMMUNITY STRENGTH**

Goal: Cultivate and maintain a culture at Western Oregon University that embraces collaboration, connection, and communication as we build meaningful partnerships with internal and external communities, while enriching the educational experience of our students.

### **Activities & Accomplishments**

Academic Affairs is committed to cultivating and maintaining a culture that emphasizes collaboration, connection, and communication. This approach extends to our partnerships, both internal and external, as we continue to enrich the educational experience of our students and strengthen ties with broader communities.

1. We continue to build on our newest initiatives is a partnership with Oregon State University (OSU), aimed at expanding access to higher education for students who might not otherwise have the opportunity to attend college. This collaboration is not only an example of creative problem-solving but also a reflection of our commitment to meeting the needs of Oregon’s students and enhancing educational access.
2. Starting Fall 2025, Western Oregon University (WOU), in partnership with Lane Community College, sees a strategic opportunity to expand international student enrollment through a formal transfer admissions arrangement with LCC. Under this agreement, qualified international students from the LCC who meet specific admission requirements will be guaranteed admission to WOU, where they will be eligible to complete a bachelor’s degree. This initiative offers a clear and efficient degree completion pathway, ensuring a seamless transition of academic credits from LCC to WOU. This partnership will build on the ongoing enrollment efforts by our admissions team as well as our path to increasing our international student body.