Remarks by W. Andrew Marcus, 2012 Wayne Westling Award Recipient – Taken from minutes of the May 23, 2012 University Senate meeting

Senate President Kyr then presented the 2012 Wayne Westling Award to Associate Dean Andrew Marcus. He thanked him for his service, and remarked that he was a model of service and leadership for everyone at the university.

Associate Dean Marcus stated that it was an honor to receive the award. He was completely shocked and surprised upon receiving his notification email from Senate President Kyr. It was all the more meaningful to him in this particular year because of the kind of year that the university had been through. He commented that it had been a year of adjustment for him both personally and professionally due to his new responsibilities as Associate Dean. He then acknowledged Rachele Raia and commented that one of the amazing things about her was her ability to mentor others, including him. She had guided him through many sticky situations in his new position and remarked that she was a true leader in a very quiet way that he greatly appreciated and thanked her for that.

He had spoken with many people in the room during past Senate meetings and his message had remained the same. According to Associate Dean Marcus, what set the University of Oregon apart from other institutions was that the UO had a culture that was radically different from any other university he had ever been associated with. That culture was one of community. The UO was a place where people came together to work out their difference in an attempt to find ways to move forward and to create a unified vision for the university. He had learned that occasionally there are those people do not feel engaged within that community in the same ways as others for various reasons, but even those individuals are interested in stepping forward and making a difference through collaborative endeavors that are taking place in the Senate body. The UO engaged in a remarkable and, he jokingly remarked teeth grinding, annoying, and terrible, committee structure. He believed that the power of that process was one that truly brought inclusiveness in a way that he had not seen at other institutions. It was most stunningly displayed this year by the great attendance of the university community in McArthur Court to cheer on former University President Richard Lariviere, and even more profoundly at the display of silence as that group greeted Chancellor Pernsteiner. He commented that this was taken a step further by the unanimous passage of radical changes to the UO Constitution, which in his opinion and the opinion of several colleagues not affiliated with the UO who were in attendance at that meeting of the Statutory Faculty Assembly was virtually unheard of. For him, that moment was very validating.

Associate Dean Marcus asked why was the UO so different and what was the culture he was referring to. He believed it was because of service and the day-to-day functions of the university. He then referenced a meeting of the CAS Dean’s Council that had taken place just that morning where a very engaging conversation had taken place regarding the quality of education that was taking place at the university. He also mentioned that he was serving on the administration’s committee that was negotiating
with the GTFF (Graduate Teaching Fellowship Federation) Committee, and he realized that sometimes a table could feel like a barrier. This made him feel concerned about the future of the university as it went forward in negotiations with the newly created faculty union. His hope, which had been echoed today by many others, was that this new opportunity could be seen as a chance to highlight a wonderful social experiment where a new way forward could be found for the future. He believed that service would make that possible.

He closed his remarks by sharing a quote from his mother with the Senate body. When he entered academia, his mother told him that she only had one request of him, which was, “for goodness sakes, don’t become a cynic.” His mother had grown up in academia and it seemed to him that academics were bred to be critical. He believed that through this process, a sense of hope and vision could become lost. He never wanted to see that happen, and believed that the biggest threat to the university was not budget deficits, enrollment increases, or unions, but was cynicism. He remarked that the University of Oregon was the place where public education could be defined for the future. As he accepted the Wayne Westling award, he asked the Senate body to consider the deep joy that could be found in contributing to a place that was so remarkable.