



May 12, 2022

MEMORANDUM

TO: University of Oregon Senators

FROM: Michael H. Schill, President and Professor of Law

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Michael Schill".

RE: Strategic Priorities (2021–26)

Provost Patrick Phillips and I are pleased to share with the University Senate our strategic priorities for 2021–26. This document updates and extends the university's [strategic framework](#), a set of goals and aspirations adopted in 2016 in support of the UO's [mission, vision, and values](#).

While the university has achieved many of the priorities identified in the initial strategic framework, the vision of excellence in research and educational impact, student success, inclusion and diversity, and service to society is as relevant today as it was six years ago.

The priorities set forth in this document are typically ones that cross academic disciplines and our schools and colleges. They will provide Provost Phillips and I with a set of objectives by which to focus our energy and judge our work for the next five years. These priorities have taken shape over the last two years, with input from senate leadership, hundreds of faculty members, working groups, school and college deans, the vice presidents, and other administrative and academic leaders. We thank the many stakeholders for their insight and commitment to developing strategies that will continue our ascent as one of the nation's preeminent public research universities.

Like the initial strategic framework, this set of priorities is not designed as a plan with metrics and prescribed tactics. And importantly, it is not an exhaustive list of what the university will seek to achieve over the next five years. Indeed, we invite each and every school and academic or administrative unit to develop their own priorities and to suggest ways they can participate in these central ones. In addition, like all plans, this set of priorities may change over time as our community and its aspirations change.

The attached priorities are meant to guide us, as president and provost, as we focus the institution's efforts to create knowledge in service of the public good; educate the next



generation of students so they can achieve and contribute; and drive meaningful impact for our state, nation, and world.

I invite you to review the document and I look forward to discussing these strategic priorities with the senate during its May 18, 2022, meeting. We hope to learn from you and hear your suggestions.

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### Introduction

Seven years ago, the University of Oregon community set out on an ambitious journey to realize our mission in new and tangible ways. Over 60 faculty members, administrators, and staff brought bold vision, collective intellect, and focused energy to the process which resulted in the development of a mission-aligned “Strategic Framework.”

#### *Mission*

*The University of Oregon is a comprehensive public research university committed to exceptional teaching, discovery, and service. We work at a human scale to generate big ideas. As a community of scholars, we help individuals question critically, think logically, reason effectively, communicate clearly, act creatively, and live ethically.*

On February 29, 2016, the President and Provost formally adopted the Strategic Framework that would guide the university from 2016 to 2021. In the six years since the Strategic Framework was adopted, together we have achieved many of its objectives. Highlighted accomplishments include:

1. Adopted a new budget model
2. Increased annual research expenditures by 28 percent
3. Completed an unprecedented \$3.24 billion campaign
4. Increased the size of the faculty
5. Renovated or built three residence halls
6. Completed over \$200 million of classroom and laboratory renovations
7. Acquired a building in downtown Eugene for art and design studios
8. Built the Lyllye Reynolds-Parker Black Cultural Center and made a series of investments in diversity, equity, and inclusion
9. Named a new residence hall in honor of the Kalapuya tribe and another in honor of a distinguished black alumnus
10. Opened Tykeson Hall, hired over 23 new academic and career advisors, and increased our four-year graduation rate by ten percentage points
11. Improved our IT infrastructure and services
12. Created new academic graduate and undergraduate programs in areas as diverse as Black studies, LatinX studies, data science, bio-engineering, and ethnic studies
13. Established the Knight Campus for Accelerating Scientific Impact dedicated to scientific discovery and impact

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Despite our progress we still have much work to do to realize our substantial aspirations of excellence and equitable outcomes for all. For example, no matter how successful we have been in increasing retention and graduation rates, increasing student diversity, revising our curriculum, increasing our sponsored research, and renewing our physical plant, continuous improvement is required to allow us to achieve our vision of becoming one of the preeminent public research universities in the nation. Indeed, in some critical areas, we have not made nearly enough progress, such as improving career readiness among our students, adopting a data-driven approach to all aspects of our operation, and reducing disparities in achievement among our students.

Over the last several years, we, along with other universities throughout the nation, have wrestled with budget constraints, learned as we gained new insights through our nation's reckoning in the aftermath of the George Floyd murder, and developed deeper levels of resilience as we journeyed through the many twists and turns of the COVID-19 pandemic. Our community has pulled together remarkably to ensure that our mission—teaching, research, and service—has not lagged. In many ways, our experience through the pandemic has reinforced certain elements of our mission such as the importance of in-person residential education, and our use of scientific research to benefit the community and the State of Oregon.

### The Next Five Years

The University of Oregon is a comprehensive university rooted in the liberal arts and sciences. We are dedicated to the production of knowledge, the creation of art, music, and culture, and the transmission of these advances to future generations. Our journey of excellence continues, and our vision is as clear today as it was when we initially launched the Strategic Framework. Our progress has reaffirmed the importance of the UO as the flagship public research university within Oregon, building upon our traditional strength in research and education to play a critical role in serving the public good.

As we look to the future, we remain committed to our mission and the vitality of our Strategic Framework, a set of goals and aspirations that are as relevant today as they were six years ago. Therefore, we will continue to operate under the existing framework for the next five years.

#### ***Vision***

*We aspire to be a preeminent and innovative public research university encompassing the humanities and arts, the natural and social sciences, and the professions. We seek to enrich the human condition through collaboration, teaching, mentoring, scholarship, experiential learning, creative inquiry, scientific discovery, outreach, and public service. We are committed to the principles of equity, inclusion, and diversity in everything we do.*

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As we adapt the Strategic Framework to its next stage of development, we will continue to build our strengths and our outcomes. We will deepen our resolve of being a world-renowned research institution devoted to student care and success, furthering knowledge, and striving to make positive societal impact. We will expand and nurture initiatives which directly address local, regional, and global challenges. We will pursue diversity, equity, and inclusion in each of our many departments, offices, and academic programs. We will achieve our goals by leveraging strengths and talent *across* disciplines, schools, colleges, centers, and institutes as a platform for furthering community impact, educational access, research advancement, and faculty development.

In this update to the Strategic Framework, we identify a set of university objectives that the President and Provost will focus their attention on over the next five years. Each of these objectives will require the effort and creativity of faculty and staff in more than one school or college. A healthy university committed to continuous improvement relies upon *both* the central university *and* its schools, colleges, and other academic units to take the lead on furthering academic progress. The central university—typically through the President and Provost—facilitates and/or leads efforts that span more than one unit. These typically include interdisciplinary academic initiatives that require the coordination and cooperation of more than one school or college as well as those student- or service- oriented activities that involve the whole campus. This document will focus on these objectives.

Importantly, this is not an exhaustive list of what the University of Oregon will seek to accomplish over the next five years. Indeed, university-wide or central administration-led initiatives are only one part of our strategy for the future. Each of the schools and colleges, and each of the departments within schools and colleges, need to identify strategic objectives of their own and work toward their fulfillment. These will largely be led by the deans, department heads, and museum directors. Support for these unit-based strategies may include seed grants from the central university, unit fundraising from alumni and friends, and faculty allocated through the annual institutional hiring plan process led by the Provost similar to what we have done with the new School of Global Studies in the College of Arts and Sciences, the Center for Science Communication Research in the School of Journalism and Communication, the Business Law Program in the Law School, and Urbanism Next in the College of Design.

### University-wide Research and Curricular Initiatives

The University of Oregon will focus on a set of research and curricular initiatives that bring together strengths from multiple parts of the university. By bringing together faculty from different disciplines, we will generate new knowledge and prepare our students for careers that require training in multiple knowledge domains. A common thread that informs all of our initiatives is a focus on *impact* and *excellence* as well as a commitment to equity and inclusion. As a leading public research university, we are committed to doing research that benefits our state, the nation, and the world. We will have the most impact if we engage those parts of the university with the greatest potential for achieving this impact.

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### 1. Environment

We are in the midst of unprecedented and transformative environmental change. We face a set of related and integrated challenges – the effects of global climate change, the impacts of structural racism, increased economic insecurity, and the public health fallout from a global pandemic. The University of Oregon has long been associated with environmental research, pedagogy, and activism. We have distinctive strengths in the study of environmental protection, clean energy, global warming, and environmental equity. Today, perhaps more than at any time in our history, our work in this area is vital. Climate change is one of the greatest challenges our nation and the world must confront in the coming years.

In 2020, the Provost brought together a faculty steering committee to focus on how our teaching and research program could address current environmental issues facing our nation, provide curricular and experiential opportunities for our students, all the while keeping a focus on equity. The steering committee has identified several areas of particular strength and impact within the university including energy and decarbonization, natural hazards and resilience, natural climate solutions, and sustainability and the designed environment. Sufused throughout these topics are concerns for environmental equity. We are poised to implement new degree programs and research support systems that will address student interest and have impacts on environmental policy and mitigation strategies in Oregon and beyond.

### 2. Faculty Diversity

The aftermath of the George Floyd killing re-focused the nation and the University of Oregon on the gaping inequality among different racial groups in the United States and the need to ensure that our educational programs are diverse and inclusive. The university has established initiatives to increase faculty diversity and expertise in racial disparities and social justice, new academic programs in LatinX studies, Indigenous Studies, and Black Studies, and renewed focus on distinguished research activities in this area. In the next five years of the Strategic Framework, we commit ourselves to redoubling our efforts to hire diverse faculty throughout the institution—particularly in areas where they are most conspicuously absent like business and the sciences—and to faculty retention.

### 3. Data Science

The sophisticated analysis of large and varied data sets is transforming society and scholarship within universities leading to breakthroughs in understanding and the ability to improve our citizen's health and wellbeing. Today, facility with data is a prerequisite to many, if not most, jobs and necessary for our students to actively participate in our democracy. The Data Science Initiative will hire faculty in disciplines throughout the university who employ sophisticated methods to analyze data. The domains of focus thus far include accounting, biology, earth sciences, economics, education, English, geography, linguistics, marketing analytics, physics, and sociology.

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An undergraduate program which began in fall term 2020 has 85 students in its first two cohorts and has served 271 students in DSCI 101, an introductory gen ed course required for entry into the major. In addition, a new joint research center on biomedical data science has been formed with Oregon Health Sciences University (OHSU), with a focus on cancer prevention and cures.

### 4. Knight Campus for Advancing Scientific Impact

In 2020, the Knight Campus opened with a new state-of-the-art scientific research building. The Knight Campus has already hired 13 tenure-related faculty members. An additional 78 faculty members from departments as diverse as biology, chemistry, and philosophy have joined as associate or affiliated faculty.

The mission of the Knight Campus is to fast-track scientific discoveries into innovations that improve the quality of life for people in Oregon, the nation, and the world. Thus far the Knight Campus has established research priorities in the following areas: bioengineering, materials for biological applications, precision medical technologies, complex biological systems, and synthetic biology/molecular engineering.

The Knight Campus recently received a second \$500 million gift from Phil and Penny Knight which will allow it to add a second research building and at least 17 additional tenure-related faculty members. It has also been the recipient of a \$35 million grant from the Wu-Tsai Foundation that will link the Knight Campus, the Human Physiology Department, and Athletics in a research project on human performance.

The Knight Campus has also begun a joint bioengineering PhD program with Oregon State University. This is the first engineering degree at the University of Oregon and will be expanded over the next five years. In addition, the University Senate, Board of Trustees, and the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) have approved a new undergraduate degree in bioengineering which will be implemented as the Knight Campus builds its faculty.

### 5. Sport and Wellness

The Sport and Wellness Initiative will extend the University of Oregon's already strong reputation and leadership in the field. Through this initiative, we will establish ourselves as global leaders in the sport business, marketing, communication, human performance and wellness industry and set the global research agenda in this set of fields. We will pursue the discovery of valuable research outcomes that will translate into meaningful and positive health impacts for the state of Oregon and the world. We will also contribute insights into the economics, business, law, and culture of the global sports industry.

The University of Oregon will also deliver a new model of transdisciplinary education and research that recognizes the integrated nature of sport and wellness fields and innovate

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academic experiences for the next generation of leaders. Our programs, courses, research, and partnerships will be structured to address complex sport and wellness problems, examine issues of race in both intercollegiate and professional sports, and attract students from every corner of the globe.

### 6. The Ballmer Institute for Children's Behavioral Health

The pandemic has accentuated the already severe mental health crisis facing young people in the United States—a crisis that disproportionately affects persistently underserved children and has led to growing levels of depression, anxiety, and, in some cases, suicide. We recently announced The Ballmer Institute for Children's Behavioral Health at the University of Oregon, supported by a \$425 million philanthropic contribution from Steve and Connie Ballmer.

The Ballmer Institute will help countless youth in the state and ultimately the nation by addressing the shortfall of trained behavioral health professionals. Led by two of the highest ranked units in our university—the Psychology Department and the College of Education—we will hire 25 new faculty members, begin a certificate program in behavioral health for teachers in the Portland area, and launch a four-year bachelor's degree program to train University of Oregon students to provide mental health services in K-12 schools. We will promote diversity both in our hiring of faculty and in our selection of students so that these future school-based professionals will look like the populations they serve.

The Ballmer Institute will also engage in clinically based research on what interventions are most effective in promoting good behavioral health among our young people.

### 7. Innovation and Entrepreneurship

One of the ways the University of Oregon can serve the State of Oregon is to create new businesses to bring innovations to market and to generate economic activity and jobs for Oregonians. We have a rich legacy of innovation, stretching back to the university's founding in 1876 and the emergence of Nike in the 1960s, and extending to contemporary research-based spinouts in fields ranging from education to materials science.

Knight Campus faculty, working with our basic scientists, the vice president for research and innovation, and others will increasingly develop and monetize intellectual property created by faculty and researchers at the university. These efforts will include joint ventures with private companies and the creation of investment funds (both philanthropic and equity) to enable faculty and graduate students to bring their ideas to market, form companies, and thereby impact society. In addition to directly adding to the economic output of the state through company formation, one of the most important things we will do is to educate a new generation of entrepreneurs.



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**8. Global Studies and Languages**

As the world struggles with a health pandemic, racial reckoning, climate change, and the rise of authoritarianism, the need for people who can think, communicate, and collaborate across cultures and nations has never been greater. These major societal issues inherently transcend borders and are global. They also require individuals who are adept in approaching problems and solutions from multiple and interdisciplinary perspectives and who can communicate and collaborate across diverse cultures and peoples.

The new School of Global Studies and Languages within the College of Arts and Sciences provides an opportunity to draw on diverse strengths in languages and social sciences at the UO to provide new training and career opportunities for students and support for innovative research among faculty. To date, the faculty have articulated a clear vision of what the school can become and the central administration have committed substantial resources curricular innovation, international engagement, and new facilities that will allow the school to create a clear identity and base of operations within Friendly Hall. Next steps involve hiring a new director for the school, implementation of new curriculum and hiring of new faculty.

**Student Success**

There is no goal more important to our university and the State of Oregon than educating our students and launching them into productive lives. The university has defined student success as follows: “Our students will graduate from the University of Oregon having had a positive experience, and will be well educated, socially responsible and career ready.” Over the next five years, we commit ourselves to make further progress on timely graduation for all students and on career readiness. In furtherance of student success we will also pay attention to and continue to enhance services for students whose performance is threatened by mental health issues.

**1. Timely graduation**

One of the principal objectives of the 2016 Strategic Framework was an expansion of advising and the removal of barriers to timely graduation. The value of a college degree has increased dramatically in recent years. Failure of students to graduate on time, or sometimes at all, is extraordinarily costly to our students and their families and represents a waste of public resources.

The opening of Tykeson Hall, and the investment by the university in 23 new academic advisors, contributed to an 11.4 percentage point increase in the four-year graduation rate to 61.3% in 2019. The pandemic, the economic distress accompanying the pandemic, and the university’s adoption of remote education for much of the 2020-21 school year has taken its toll on timely graduation. According to the most recent data, the graduation rate

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has fallen to 59.3% (for the class that matriculated in 2017). The retention rate for first time, first year students, however, has increased from 84.2% to 87.2%.

Disparities in graduation rates exist between the university's white student population and its under-represented students. Among whites, the four-year graduation rate is 61.5%. The corresponding rates for Black, Latino, and Native American/American Eskimo students are 51.4%, 50.4%, and 50%, respectively. Socioeconomic disparities in timely graduation also exist: Among Pell Eligible students, the four-year graduation rate is 51.7%; among non-Pell Eligible students it is 61.7%.

The university will focus on two objectives with respect to timely graduation. First, we will recover the two percentage point pandemic-related loss in four-year graduation rates and push the rate even higher than our record of 61.3%. Second, we will work to reduce the disparities between under-represented student graduation rates and white graduation rates. We will also reduce or eliminate disparities between lower income and first-generation students, and the rest of our students. It is simply unacceptable for these disparities to continue, and their elimination is the top priority of our student success and equity efforts. To make this happen, we will focus on intensive advising, efforts to achieve inclusion, financial aid, and the hiring and retention of historically under-represented faculty and staff.

## 2. Career Readiness

One of the primary outcomes students and parents, alike, seek from a college degree is a career, preferably one that is fulfilling to them and allows them to live comfortably. Indeed, the building of Tykeson Hall was informed by the belief that academic advising should be paired to career advising and experiential activities like internships and research assistantships. Despite some improvements in focus and impressive projects like the Portland Internship Experience and several internal internship opportunities, we need to do more to successfully launch our students and ensure opportunities are available to all students regardless of their race, income, or other characteristics. This effort will require the cooperation of the Career Center, Undergraduate Education and Student Success, Residential Life, and the University of Oregon Alumni Association. It will also require the investment of resources for career advisors, paid internships, and staff to connect students to internship opportunities and other forms of experiential learning. We anticipate our efforts to promote career readiness will make good use of our new Portland campus.

## Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Built into virtually all of these initiatives is a concern for diversity, equity, and inclusion. While our Class of 2025 is more diverse than any class before it, we have not made significant progress in recruiting Black and Native-American students. With our existing and projected growth of LatinX students, we will examine how we can achieve "Hispanic Serving Institution" status in the next five

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to ten years. We also need to strengthen our efforts to recruit and retain first-generation students. And, with the recent decline of international students at the university, we need to broaden our outreach to international students throughout the world.

We also need to increase our faculty and staff of color. It is not enough to simply hire diverse faculty and staff and think the job is over. Instead, we need to focus simultaneously on retention. Creating community and improving the campus climate to ensure everyone feels welcome at the University of Oregon is essential to this effort. The 2022 Climate Survey for UO Employees is a step toward achieving this goal. The results of the survey will inform future efforts.

Over the past seven years, we have experienced a rapid decline in our international student population. These students—from all over the world—contribute to diversity and globalism on campus. We will be stepping up efforts to recruit international students—undergraduate and graduate—and supporting them during their time at the University of Oregon.

## **Portland**

The purchase of the campus in Northeast Portland formerly used by Concordia University presents extraordinary opportunities for the University of Oregon. The highest priority is to establish the campus as the home of the Ballmer Institute. Second, the university will transition programs currently operated out of the White Stag Building in Old Town to the new campus. The university will also engage in a planning effort with deans, administrators, and faculty to determine what other programs could be located on the campus. The opportunities are endless and include new degree programs proposed by our schools and colleges, internship programs, continuing education, and pipeline initiatives.

## **Scholarships and Financial Aid**

Scholarships and financial aid are essential for the university to achieve many of the priorities set forth in this document. Some academic programs such as those within the Ballmer Institute will not achieve their goals if we do not provide a significant proportion of the enrolled students with scholarships. In addition, the university's objective to enroll and graduate more under-represented students and students from families with modest incomes will only succeed if we can offer appropriate financial aid. While the Pathway Oregon scholarship model is sufficient to enable most lower income Oregon residents to attend the university tuition-free, it does not cover housing and food expenses, which are increasingly becoming barriers to attendance. Thus, in the next five years we will seek to expand our financial aid and scholarship programs to help more students afford the full cost of attending the University of Oregon.

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**Fundraising**

Each of the priorities set forth in this document will require the commitment of financial resources. In most cases, given the exceptionally low subsidy provided by the state to the university and the need to keep tuition increases as low as possible, philanthropy is essential. In June 2021, the university completed a \$3.24 million fundraising campaign which exceeded its original goal by \$1.24 million. Over the next five years the President, Provost, Vice President for Advancement, and the Deans will plan and execute a new fundraising campaign to increase the endowment of the university and to fund its initiatives. It is expected that our deans will also pursue fundraising for unit-specific goals.