

REPORT ON INTERIM VISIT TO OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY FOR THE
COMMISSION ON COLLEGES OF THE NORTHWEST ASSOCIATION

Team members: N. Edd Miller, former President, University of Nevada, Reno, *E. M.*
Jim L. Ozbun, President, North Dakota State University

The site visit took place on Thursday, March 30, 1995

The team met with:

John V. Byrne, President
Roy G. Arnold, Provost and Executive Vice President
W. Bruce Shepard, Director Undergraduate Academic Programs
John Koch, University Facilities Planner
Jo Anne Trow, Vice Provost for Student Affairs
Lee Schroeder, Chief Business Officer
Phyllis Lee, Director, Multicultural Affairs
Stephanie Sanford, Director of Affirmative Action
Barbara Paige, Director Difference, Power, & Discrimination
Herbert Aschkenasy, Vice President of the Oregon State Board of
Higher Education
Joseph W. Cox, Chancellor for Oregon State System of Higher
Education
Tom Maresh, Dean of Graduate School
Joy Hughes, Associate Provost for Information Services
Lyla Houglum, Dean and Director of Extended Education
Eight student leaders

In addition, the team was given a tour of the campus.

Throughout the visit the team was treated most hospitably and the people with whom the team visited were frank and open and most helpful.

It should be noted, too, that the Interim Report furnished to the team was outstanding in every way. It was complete, well organized, well stated, and filled with important and relevant information.

This report will focus on the recommendations made by the team which conducted the 1990 site visit.

1. Although a series of consultants have been or will be engaged to resolve problems, there is grave concern for the condition of the physical facilities at OSU. Lack of repair-and-maintenance resources, and the continuing qualitative and quantitative demands on existing space may adversely effect the instructional and research enterprises and, indeed, future recruitment and retention of quality faculty, staff and students.

Repair and maintenance funds are still grossly inadequate. Some work is being done, but without additional state funding, needed progress will continue to be slow. While the team was there, work was being done on one major building. The theater, which was located in an unsafe building, has been moved to a different and appropriately renovated building and the old theater space has been creatively renovated as a space for gymnastics. So, even with severely limited funds, some repair-and-maintenance is being done. Much more, however, remains to be done when funds can be made available.

2. The University is encouraged to develop strategies that will respond to shifts in enrollment that may be associated with changes in faculty teaching loads, the implementation of the general education core curriculum and the policy of open-access to "required" courses.

Several changes have been made in the University's program offerings, including the elimination of a few degree programs (e.g. technical journalism, religious studies). The core curriculum seems to be healthy and doing well.

3. Concern is expressed that appropriate guidelines be developed for the use of undergraduate teaching assistants in classroom, laboratory and recitation settings.

The team discussed this with the student leaders with whom we met. Apparently, this is not a problem presently. Indeed, the students expressed satisfaction that with some exceptions they are being taught by regular, full-time members of the faculty.

4. In the 1987 document, Preparing for the Future, one of the goals includes developing in students the capability to "communicate orally and in writing with precision, accuracy and effectiveness." The committee recommends that the general education core curriculum be reviewed to assure that it will provide students with the opportunity to develop the capability to "communicate ORALLY with precision, accuracy and effectiveness."

This seems to have been accomplished, at least in large part. There are thirty sections offered in the Spring term of the two oral communication courses which count toward meeting the requirements of the general education core curriculum.

5. The committee applauds the University's desire to emphasize and support excellence in its undergraduate programs, but expresses concern that expansion of existing programs and the initiation of new programs not be undertaken until appropriate new or reallocated funds are available. In general, goals must be matched with complementary resources.

The team believes this is being done. Reduction of the number of degree programs is an indicator of the administration's making hard decisions to utilize available funds in the most effective way. Several administrative positions have also been eliminated and functions have been grouped together.

6. Although the strong commitment to decentralized control serve OSU quite well, this University could benefit from close examination of certain academic, administrative and support services with an eye to consolidation, creating certain economies, justifying additional budget need, and improving overall effectiveness. Particular attention is drawn to dispersed responsibility for the physical plant, particularly building and grounds care, the small "departmental" libraries, some aspects of computer services and campus signage.

Much progress has been made at Oregon State University with regard to this recommendation. A few instances serve as indicators of progress in this area: The change in title and expanded function, as well, from Provost to Provost and Executive Vice President, the placing of several communication oriented functions, including the library, under a single administrator, the "departmental" libraries are now simply reading rooms, not connected to the central library; several positions have been eliminated in student services; important progress has been made in consolidating all extension type services; the programs in Home Economics and Education have been merged; buildings and grounds report to the Business Manager, who reports directly to the President and Executive Vice President. Building signage, both inside and outside, has improved some, but, over-all, is still a problem.

7. Concern is expressed that the College of Education and the Division of Continuing Education, both key elements in the University family, continue to appear unsettled. The University is encouraged to provide the necessary support to bring both units into an effective position as quickly as possible.

The dynamic newly appointed Dean and Director of Extended Education is tackling this problem in a most effective way. In addition, the College of Education has been administratively placed with Home Economics into a single College.

8. The committee expresses concern that along with questionable facility maintenance and repair, low faculty salaries may become a factor that seriously compromises the teaching and research activities of O.S.U. through loss of competitive faculty and questionable morale.

This remains a problem. The administration is fully aware of it and the System Chancellor and the member of the Oregon State Board of Higher Education are keenly aware of this problem. All these people are working closely with the legislature to alleviate the problem. And there seems to be some glimmer of hope.

9. The committee is impressed with the integral role that information resources and information processing will play in the future of OSU. Accordingly, the University is encouraged to incorporate appropriate representatives from library services and the Computing Advisory Committee in current and future planning activities. Identified as potential needs are increased student access to computational facilities, increased library access and resources, and the establishment of an all-university computer or information office or officer.

Action on this recommendation has been taken: there is now an Associate Provost for Information Services. Library, computing service, and similar information resources report to her.

10. University goals suggest that a "user friendly" campus environment is a desired outcome. Improvements in campus lighting and the development of appropriate signage, both on the campus and within buildings, would significantly improve the comfort of the University's publics.

As indicated elsewhere, some progress has been made with improved signage, but more remains to be done. Campus lighting has been improved and additional plans are being made for still more lighting. It should be mentioned, too, that the grounds of the University are beautifully maintained and the campus is a very attractive one.

11. Although the goals and the plans for achieving diversity in gender and ethnicity are in place at OSU, and have produced some positive results, there continues to be a serious lack of ethnic diversity across the campus and of ethnic and gender diversity in the central administration.

Those with whom the team talked felt efforts in this direction need to be maintained. There has been improvement since the 1990 team report. These efforts are being supported and monitored by many, including a Director of Multicultural Affairs and a Director of Difference, Power & Discrimination and a Director of Affirmative Action.

A few additional comments seem to be in order:

The strategic planning initiated some five years ago has progressed and, in fact, has been institutionalized. A review of the plans now takes place on a two year cycle.

The students with whom we talked seemed somewhat concerned about campus safety. Incidents, however, have been very few. Progress on campus lighting continues. Students seem genuinely to like the University and its environment and student leadership feel they are listened to by the administration. They also feel that they are receiving a high quality education.

The most serious problems faced by the University are outgrowths of inadequate state funding: low salaries and maintenance and renovation of aging buildings.

The University has a fine administrative team and the members of the team seem to work easily and well together.