

# **OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY**

## **Executive Summary**

### **Year Seven Self-Evaluation Report To the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities**

February 2019



**Oregon State**  
University

## INTRODUCTION

Oregon State University's *Year Seven Mission Fulfillment and Sustainability Self-Evaluation Report (Seven Year Report)* documents institutional activity from 2011 to 2018. The timing of the self-evaluation has overlapped with the end of the effective period for OSU's 2014-18 strategic plan (SP3.0) and the development of our 2019-23 strategic plan (SP4.0). As a result, the past 18 months of the seven year assessment cycle have been a time of reflection, learning and development of visions and plans that will ensure the best possible future for the university and the people we serve.

Completing a comprehensive institutional-wide self-evaluation has provided an opportunity to engage with administrators, faculty, staff, students and stakeholders. In the process, we have reflected upon how OSU is meeting student achievement goals, assessing performance in student learning outcomes, stewarding resources, and fulfilling its land grant mission. The findings reported in the Self-Evaluation Report provide evidence that the university is fulfilling its mission and engaging in a continuous, data-informed self-assessment process that identifies successes, challenges, and areas for improvement.

### RESPONSES TO RECOMMENDATIONS SINCE LAST SUBMISSION

The NWCCU reaffirmed OSU's accreditation on 12 August 2011, based on the spring 2011 comprehensive self-study and full-scale evaluation. All subsequent reports submitted by OSU to the NWCCU, and responses from the Commission, are available in OSU's online accreditation archives.

OSU's *Year Seven Report* addresses the commission's recommendation that the university "further refine its articulation of an acceptable threshold of mission fulfillment." The university has evolved its definition of an acceptable threshold of mission fulfillment to more clearly and tangibly reference its distinctive role as a very research intensive (R1) public land grant university that is committed to inclusive excellence and faithful service as Oregon's statewide university.

See the Preface, Standards 1.A.2 and 5.A.2 for additional details.

### MISSION STATEMENT AND MISSION FULFILLMENT

OSU's mission statement was approved by the university's governing board in March 2004 and has been widely-publicized and referenced online and in a variety of university documents, including four strategic plans:

*As a land grant institution committed to teaching, research and outreach and engagement, Oregon State University promotes economic, social, cultural and environmental progress for the people of Oregon, the nation and the world.*

This mission is achieved by producing graduates competitive in the global economy, supporting a continuous search for new knowledge and solutions and maintaining a rigorous focus on academic excellence, particularly in the three signature areas: Advancing the Science of Sustainable Earth Ecosystems, Improving Human Health and Wellness, and Promoting Economic Growth and Social Progress.

OSU defines mission fulfillment in the context of its distinctive role as a very high research activity (Carnegie R1) public land grant university that is committed to inclusive excellence and service as Oregon's statewide university.

To assess the degree to which it is fulfilling that mission, the university has defined 17 measures ("yardsticks") that map directly to the core themes and associated objectives and indicators of achievement.

Many of the yardsticks are associated with the strategic metrics OSU tracks for the purposes of assessing progress on its strategic plans and initiatives. Acceptable thresholds for each mission fulfillment yardstick are derived with reference to outcomes for U.S. R1 land grant universities or with reference to OSU's internal benchmarks and targets that gauge progress on efforts to continuously improve in all aspects of our mission.

See Standards 1.A.2: Mission Fulfillment Yardsticks and 5.A.2 for additional details.

## **CORE THEMES, OBJECTIVES AND INDICATORS OF ACHIEVEMENT**

Consistent with the university's mission, OSU established the following core themes for the 2011-18 accreditation cycle:

1. Undergraduate Education
2. Research and Graduate Education
3. Outreach and Engagement

Associated with each core theme are objectives and indicators of achievement. Core Theme 1, Undergraduate Education, has 4 objectives and 19 indicators of achievement. Core Theme 2, Research and Graduate Education, has 3 objectives and 16 indicators of achievement. Core Theme 3, Outreach and Engagement, has 3 objectives and 15 indicators of achievement. The extent of mission fulfillment is articulated using the accomplishments for these objectives and indicators of achievement. These accomplishments are linked to seventeen mission fulfillment yardsticks.

See Standard 1.B: Core Themes for additional details.

## **PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION**

OSU has a long history of strategic planning, including comprehensive annual planning, 10-year business forecasting, 10-year capital forecasting, research planning, and university-wide diversity planning. For most of the current accreditation cycle, OSU has been guided by its 2014-18 strategic plan, *SP3.0: Focus on Excellence*, and the plan's goals are fully consistent with the core themes and indicators that reflect the fundamental elements of OSU's mission. In 2018, the university embarked on the development of *SP4.0: Transformation, Excellence and Impact*. During the early years of the next NWCCU accreditation cycle, OSU will again revisit its mission, core themes and indicators of achievement in light of the goals of SP4.0, in order to ensure continuing alignment.

OSU is committed to provide a transformative educational experience for all learners, be distinctive in its research and scholarship, and strengthen its engagement and outreach. Since OSU is one of 34 R1 land grant universities with similar missions, using this set of universities as comparators is appropriate. Many of the indicators of achievement and mission fulfillment yardsticks are among OSU's strategic university metrics, where the institution sets aspirational targets to become an even stronger and more impactful university among R1 land grant institutions.

See Standard 3.A: Institutional Planning for additional details.

## MISSION FULFILLMENT FOR CORE THEMES

**Mission Fulfillment for Core Theme 1: Undergraduate Education:** *OSU strongly fulfills its mission for Core Theme 1. As noted in Chapter 4 of the Seven Year Report, each of the four objectives has a set of indicators that points to mission fulfillment, and the collective accomplishments for these indicators of achievement and the eight mission fulfillment yardsticks support this determination. Further evidence of the achievements of the objectives for Core Theme 1 is provided by the progress the institution has made in meeting the aspirational targets for Goal 1 in SP3.0. This includes achievement of the six-year graduation rate, degrees awarded and growth in enrollment of domestically underrepresented students at OSU.*

As a central strategic plan goal, OSU has identified the importance of providing a transformative educational experience for all learners. SP3.0 detailed a number of strategies and metrics associated with promoting student success through learning experiences and outcomes that seamlessly integrate teaching and research efforts and transform both learners and the world. Pursuit of this goal is guided by the core theme focused on the undergraduate education. The four objectives delineating OSU's implementation of a transformative undergraduate experience reflect a deep commitment to providing accessible learning opportunities, rigorous degree programs, supportive learning environments and innovative curricula.

*Oregon State University strongly fulfills the following mission element related to Objective 1.1: providing broad and continuing access to undergraduate university degrees for the people of Oregon and beyond. Providing access to high-quality educational experiences for all learners is evidenced by the university increasing access and enrollments in all modalities at all levels — in Corvallis, at OSU-Cascades, and online — and increasing retention and graduation rates. OSU is aware that more work needs to be done to support the success of students from historically underrepresented groups and Pell-eligible students. While OSU has increased first-year retention rates, it aims to improve these rates across all demographic groups as part of the continuing effort to improve six-year graduation rates.*

*Oregon State University strongly fulfills the following mission element related to Objective 1.2: providing rigorous and effective undergraduate degree programs. Through the cycle of academic program reviews and annual program-level student learning assessments, OSU demonstrates a commitment to maintaining the quality, relevance and rigor of its undergraduate academic programs. Since 2011, the university has reached 100 percent compliance with Undergraduate Academic Program Reviews and 100 percent participation with annual assessment of program-level student learning outcomes. The university community has embraced full-cycle assessment, and there is strong evidence that faculty and academic leadership use program review results and assessment of student learning outcomes to make improvements and implement change. Continuing to explore improvements in the undergraduate and graduate curriculum remains a priority for the Office of the Provost leadership and the Faculty Senate.*

*Oregon State University fulfills the following mission element related to Objective 1.3: providing a supportive and healthy learning environment for student success and leadership development at all levels. However, OSU embraces the reality that further investments and commitments by the university community are needed to ensure this sense of belonging exists for all students. The most recent cohorts of first-time, full-time freshmen indicates some positive separation in first-year retention rates between students who participated in a first-year experience course versus those who did not, and OSU will continue to study these numbers to assess the value of these courses. We are encouraged to see large increases in percentages (12 and 10 percentage points) of respondents to our Campus Inclusivity Surveys, who indicated two or more contacts with OSU representatives who helped them to succeed, and that at least two resources were*

somewhat or very accessible to them. The university understands that having a sense of belonging or connection to OSU is associated with student success.

*Oregon State University fulfills the following mission element related to Objective 1.4: using faculty research and scholarship to enrich the undergraduate curriculum.* OSU faculty are dedicated to the research mission of the university, and many of them engage undergraduates in their ongoing research by providing research opportunities in labs or by bringing their research into their classrooms. A consistent draw for students to OSU is the strength and breadth of the university's collaborative research enterprise. There is evidence that the number of students engaging in experiential learning opportunities is increasing; that students value the integration of knowledge discovery and development into the undergraduate curriculum, and they rate these experiences and the innovative faculty as very important to their undergraduate careers.

See Standard 5.A.2, pages 306 – 310, for further evidence of mission fulfillment using Core Theme 1 Mission Fulfillment Yardsticks.

**Mission Fulfillment for Core Theme 2: Research and Graduate Education:** *OSU strongly fulfills its mission for Core Theme 2. The accomplishments for each of the three objectives and associated indicators supports mission fulfillment, and the collective results for these indicators of achievement and the five mission fulfillment yardsticks signal that OSU is meeting its threshold for mission fulfillment for Core Theme 2.*

Since the mid-1990s, OSU has been classified by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education as a R1 Doctoral University with very high research activity. This classification uses a research activity scale that includes information from NSF and IPEDS on research and development expenditures in science and engineering, research and development expenditures in non-science and non-engineering fields, science and engineering research staff, and the number of doctoral conferrals in the humanities, social sciences, STEM and other fields. In addition, OSU is one of only two land, sea, space and sun grant universities in the United States. These two recognitions signal a strong commitment to research, undergraduate research experiences (and experiential learning), graduate student education and mentorship, and research partnerships with national laboratories and industry.

Research activity at OSU is grounded in the colleges, schools, departments, centers and institutes. Aiding the research of faculty, graduate students, postdoctoral scholars and undergraduates is a long-standing culture of the low disciplinary walls and a high spirit of collaboration present at the university. This collaborative atmosphere is a key reason faculty across a range of disciplines, from STEM to social sciences and liberal arts, decide to take a position at OSU.

*The three objectives outlined in Core Theme 2 support OSU's mission and SP3.0. Further, the 16 indicators of achievement are in alignment with the strategies and metrics delineated in SP3.0.*

OSU's faculty have secured increased levels of funding over this accreditation cycle: 2018 represented a 34 percent increase relative to 2014. This support comes from federal and state agencies, industry partners and foundations. While the data and examples demonstrate OSU's efforts to create and maintain a diverse research and scholarship environment that consistently achieves high impacts, OSU's performance in achieving its SP3.0 targets is stellar. Total research and development expenditures and industry-funded research as a percent of total research and development expenditures are trending upward over the past seven years, demonstrating that ongoing efforts are having positive results. Research activity supports the infrastructure to deliver the highest quality of learning environment for students to succeed, and the success of OSU faculty in securing external competitive grants speaks to the quality

and relevance of their research, discovery and scholarship impacts. There are positive impacts on student learning outcomes, as demonstrated by student participation in examples of research excellence and innovation in OSU's signature areas of distinction.

OSU attracts, retains and supports an increasingly diverse graduate student population. This occurs primarily through research grants and a broad set of graduate programs. OSU's strategic plan metrics also provide a consistent data source to assess progress for Objective 2.2: master's and doctoral degrees awarded (as part of the total degrees awarded metric), doctoral degrees awarded, and total R&D expenditures. All three strategic plan metrics have been trending positively within the past seven years. The data and examples demonstrate OSU's ongoing efforts to provide high-quality training and support to graduate students and prepare them for post-graduation opportunities.

See Standard 5.A.2, pages 310 – 312, for further evidence of mission fulfillment using Core Theme 2 Mission Fulfillment Yardsticks.

**Mission Fulfillment for Core Theme 3: Outreach and Engagement:** *OSU strongly fulfills its mission for Core Theme 3. Each of the three objectives has a set of indicators that points to mission fulfillment, and the collective results from the indicators of achievement and the four mission fulfillment yardsticks support this determination.*

Outreach and engagement is central to OSU's mission as a land grant institution, as evidenced by contributions from all academic colleges and programs and units across the institution. Additionally, more than 40 community-based learning hubs provide gateways to OSU while connecting the work of the university to local partnerships and issues. OSU's deep collaboration with the communities it serves beyond the borders of its campuses has been recognized by the Carnegie Community Engagement designation.

Based on a 150-year-old tradition, the university's outreach and engagement effort is guided by the principle of enhancing access to enrichment and problem solving through reciprocal relationships. The university does this work by exchanging knowledge and resources in partnership with individuals, communities, businesses, industries, government and educational institutions. Three core theme objectives delineate OSU's implementation of its outreach and engagement mission: delivery of programs and degrees to place-bound populations; sustained collaborations and purposeful partnerships; and activities that increase economic development and quality of life. Inherent in the function of outreach and engagement is expanding the concept of learners, instructional delivery and collaborative use of research results to address societal and economic needs.

*OSU strongly fulfills the following mission element related to Objective 3.1: extending transformative educational experiences to learners, communities and organizations using means beyond traditional classroom-based instruction.* Unparalleled growth and national recognition of OSU's Ecampus programs underscore the fulfillment of Objective 3.1. There also have been significant increases in the number of noncredit certificates awarded and participant counts. Perhaps most impactful for mission fulfillment is the activities that occur within the university's youth development programs. Each year, these programs involve more than 90,000 youth throughout the state, along with over 2,000 OSU students, who receive practical experience and provide mentorship to the next generation of adults each year.

*OSU strongly fulfills its objective to build and sustain collaborative and mutually beneficial partnerships to advance learning and research with communities and stakeholders.* A second objective of Core Theme 3 focuses on collaborations with communities and stakeholders. OSU has a strong presence throughout the state. OSU faculty have secured external funding to support the university's outreach and engagement activi-

ties, and counties have increased their appropriations to offset declining state support. Collectively, this information reflects the effectiveness and impact of OSU's operations and programs and enhances the partnerships and collaboration that are essential for change and improvement to occur.

As noted in Chapter 4, the total economic impact of OSU activities across Oregon is significant and well beyond appropriations and student aid provided by the state of Oregon. The breadth, number of state-wide programs and the impact of these efforts on OSU academic programs are substantial. Meanwhile, the number of OSU's global partnerships has grown significantly, and the variety of business startups associated with the university show a solid contribution to pushing the limits of innovation. While there has been growth in the number of OSU students participating in study abroad programs, the number is small relative to OSU's enrollment. The university is reviewing policies and mechanisms to enable more students to participate in such high-impact practices without taking on a greater financial burden. *OSU fulfills this mission element, but will continue to build on its applied research in engineering, sciences, and health, as well as its global partnerships and networks to increase mission fulfillment in outreach and engagement.*

See Standard 5.A.2, pages 313 – 319, for further evidence of mission fulfillment using Core Theme 3 Mission Fulfillment Yardsticks.

OSU's strong collaborative culture and steadfast commitment to academic excellence in its three signature areas of distinction -- advancing the science of sustainable Earth ecosystems, improving human health and wellness, and promoting economic growth and social progress – provide a unique lens to further assess mission fulfillment. The report provides examples of the intersection of education, research and engagement that create a robust and integrated learning environment for student success that draws from the core themes and collaborations across the university.

During this accreditation cycle, the university has undertaken three initiatives to enhance its ongoing potential to fulfill its mission: a redesign and realignment of functions under the Provost, an evaluation of efficiencies and associated organizational changes in the Division of Finance and Administration, and the integration of compliance, audit and enterprise risk management functions.

## CONCLUSION

Completing a comprehensive institution-wide self-evaluation has benefited OSU in many ways. During the seven-year cycle, the Accreditation Steering Committee and Project Team have engaged with faculty, staff, students, administrators and stakeholders to reflect upon how well OSU is meeting student achievement goals, assessing performance in student learning, stewarding resources, and fulfilling its R1 land grant mission. This self-evolution is an authentic assessment of OSU's progress, successes and challenges. OSU also believes this self-evaluation demonstrates the university is fulfilling its mission, even as it seeks to become an ever stronger university. With the aim of continuous improvement, OSU looks forward to further evolving and refining its core themes, indicators and methods of assessing mission fulfillment in the next accreditation cycle.

Oregon State University's Year Seven Mission Fulfillment and Sustainability Self-Evaluation Report is available online at <https://leadership.oregonstate.edu/provost/2019-year-seven-self-evaluation-report>.



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