February 27, 2023

Richard Bailey Jr.
President
Southern Oregon University
1250 Siskiyou Blvd.
Ashland, OR 97520

Dear President Bailey:

Attached please find the Fall 2022 Policies, Regulations, and Financial Review (PRFR) Evaluation Committee's review of Southern Oregon University. The attached review documents areas where the institution was found to be in compliance with the NWCCU Standards for Accreditation and where additional opportunities for improvement exist. Please note that the Year Seven Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness (EIE) Evaluation Team will receive a copy of this report, as will the NWCCU Board of Commissioners at your EIE evaluation by the Commission in roughly one year's time.

NWCCU asks that you address any areas of needed improvement that the PRFR Evaluation Committee has noted as findings in this report in your EIE self-evaluation. Please feel free to reach out to your NWCCU Staff Liaison if you have further questions.

Type 1: Standards Substantially in Compliance but in Need of Improvement
- Finding Type 1: Fall 2022 Policies, Regulations, and Financial Review - The following standards are areas substantially in compliance but where improvement is needed (2020 Standard(s) 2.B.1;2.B.2;2.D.2;2.D.3;2.F.3;2.F.4;2.G.6)

Future Evaluations
- Year 7 - Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness Fall 2023
  - Finding Type 1: Fall 2022 Policies, Regulations, and Financial Review

Thank you for your commitment to the process of peer evaluation and continuous quality improvement. If you have questions about any of the information in this letter, please contact your staff liaison, Dr. Gita Bangera, at gbangera@nwccu.org.

Sincerely,

Ron Larsen
Senior Vice President

cc: Dr. Dan DeNeui, Associate Provost

Peer Evaluation for: Southern Oregon University

Standard 2: Governance, Resources, and Capacity
The institution articulates its commitment to a structure of governance that is inclusive in its planning and decision-making. Through its planning, operational activities, and allocation of resources, the institution demonstrates a commitment to student learning and achievement in an environment respectful of meaningful discourse.

Standard 2.A.1
The institution demonstrates an effective governance structure, with a board(s) or other governing body(ies) composed predominantly of members with no contractual, employment relationship, or personal financial interest with the institution. Such members shall also possess clearly defined authority, roles, and responsibilities. Institutions that are part of a complex system with multiple boards, a centralized board, or related entities shall have, with respect to such boards, written and clearly defined contractual authority, roles, and responsibilities for all entities. In addition, authority and responsibility between the system and the institution is clearly delineated in a written contract, described on its website and in its public documents, and provides the NWCCU accredited institution with sufficient autonomy to fulfill its mission.

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:
- Institutional governance policies and procedures ✓
- System governance policies and procedures (if applicable) ✓
- Multiple board governing policies and procedures (if applicable) ✗
- Board's calendar for reviewing institutional and board policies and procedures ✓
- Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation referencing governance structure ✓

Rationale: Southern Oregon University demonstrates effective governance with a Board of Trustees that meets regularly and has clearly defined authority and responsibilities delineated from the president.¬† Governing documents are readily available online and clearly show when they have been updated and implemented.

Standard 2.A.2
The institution has an effective system of leadership, staffed by qualified administrators, with appropriate levels of authority, responsibility, and accountability who are charged with planning, organizing, and managing the institution and assessing its achievements and effectiveness.

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:
- Leadership organizational chart ✓
- Curriculum vitae of executive leadership ✓

Rationale: Leadership at SOU includes a qualified and diverse executive leadership team that includes roles overseeing a comprehensive set of areas including academic affairs, student affairs and enrollment, equity, diversity and inclusion, finance and administration, and advancement.

Standard 2.A.3
The institution employs an appropriately qualified chief executive officer with full-time responsibility to the institution. The chief executive may serve as an ex officio member of the governing board(s) but may not serve as its chair.

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:
- Curriculum vitae of President/CEO ✓

Rationale: President Bailey was appointed nearly a year ago and has prior experience as a university president along with a career in the Air Force and previous administrative roles in higher education.

Standard 2.A.4
The institution's decision-making structures and processes, which are documented and publicly available, must include provisions for the consideration of the views of faculty, staff, administrators, and students on matters in which each has a direct and reasonable interest.

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:

- Institutional governance policies and procedures (see 2.A.1) ✓

Rationale: SOU provides opportunities for faculty, staff, and students to participate in decision-making processes through a Faculty Senate, Student Senate, and the recently convened Staff Assembly. Classified staff are also members of a union with a collective bargaining agreement for public universities in Oregon.

Standard 2.B.1

Within the context of its mission and values, the institution adheres to the principles of academic freedom and independence that protect its constituencies from inappropriate internal and external influences, pressures, and harassment.

Team Verification: Needs improvement

Evidence:

- Academic freedom policies and procedures ✓

Rationale: The support of academic freedom is codified in policy at SOU and the collective bargaining agreement with classified staff and the faculty senate bylaws.

Standard 2.B.2

Within the context of its mission and values, the institution defines and actively promotes an environment that supports independent thought in the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge. It affirms the freedom of faculty, staff, administrators, and students to share their scholarship and reasoned conclusions with others. While the institution and individuals within the institution may hold to a particular personal, social, or religious philosophy, its constituencies are intellectually free to test and examine all knowledge and theories, thought, reason, and perspectives of truth. Individuals within the institution allow others the freedom to do the same.

Team Verification: Needs improvement

Rationale: SOU provided documentation demonstrating polices and expectations of behavior that include support for independent thought and expression but current policies need to be available on the website.

Standard 2.C.1

The institution's transfer-of-credit policy maintains the integrity of its programs and facilitates the efficient mobility of students desirous of the completion of their educational credits, credentials, or degrees in furtherance of their academic goals.

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:

- Transfer of credit policies and procedures ✓

Rationale: SOU has policies and procedures to facilitate students transferring along with the opportunity to search for course equivalencies on their transfer website and for students to meet with transfer specialists for advising.

Standard 2.C.2

The institution's policies and procedures related to student rights and responsibilities should include, but not be limited to, provisions related to academic honesty, conduct, appeals, grievances, and accommodations for persons with disabilities.

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:

Documentation of student's rights and responsibilities policies and procedures, which include:

- Academic honesty ✓
- Appeals, grievances ✓
- Accommodations for persons with disabilities ✓

Rationale: SOU provided policies that demonstrate clear rights and responsibilities and processes for adjudication including definitions, alternative dispute resolution options, and an FAQ to explain community standards. Policies and procedures for accommodations for disabilities were provided.

Standard 2.C.3

The institution's academic and administrative policies and procedures should include admission and placement policies that guide the enrollment of students in courses and programs through an evaluation of prerequisite knowledge, skills, and abilities to ensure a reasonable probability of student success at a level commensurate with the institution's expectations. Such policies should also include a policy regarding continuation in and termination from its educational programs, including its appeal and re-admission policy.

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:
- Policies and procedures for recruiting, admitting, and placing students ✓
- Policies/procedures related to continuation and termination from educational programs including appeal process and readmission policies/procedures ✓

Rationale: SOU's University Catalog and admissions webpage include clear descriptions of admission and placement policies and webpages provide descriptions of academic standing with related procedures for both undergraduate and graduate programs.

Standard 2.C.4

The institution's policies and procedures regarding the secure retention of student records must include provisions related to confidentiality, release, and the reliable backup and retrievability of such records.

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:
- Policies/procedures regarding secure retention of student records, (i.e., back-up, confidentiality, release, protection from cybersecurity issues or other emergencies) ✓

Rationale: SOU provided a policy dedicated to outlining definitions, variety, scope, location, and timelines for the maintenance of student records and information security policy.

Standard 2.D.1

The institution represents itself clearly, accurately, and consistently through its announcements, statements, and publications. It communicates its academic intentions, programs, and services to students and to the public and demonstrates that its academic programs can be completed in a timely fashion. It regularly reviews its publications to ensure accuracy and integrity in all representations about its mission, programs, and services.

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:
- Policies/procedures for reviewing published materials (print or websites) that assures institutional integrity ✓

Rationale: SOU's office of Marketing and Communication provides robust and consistent communications for marketing and information sharing amongst campus and external stakeholders. Information Technology maintains websites and social media with this content.

Standard 2.D.2

The institution advocates, subscribes to, and exemplifies high ethical standards in its management and operations, including in its dealings with the public, NWCCU, and external organizations, including the fair and equitable treatment of students, faculty, administrators, staff, and other stakeholders and constituencies. The institution ensures that complaints and grievances are addressed in a fair, equitable, and timely manner.

Team Verification: Needs improvement

Evidence:
- Policies/procedures for reviewing internal and external complaints and grievances ✓

Rationale: SOU provided access to a number of policies that clearly communicate expectations of behavior and operations along with procedures for grievances and resolutions but most recent policies do not appear to be listed on the website.

Standard 2.D.3

The institution adheres to clearly defined policies that prohibit conflicts of interest on the part of members of the governing board(s), administration, faculty, and staff.

Team Verification: Needs improvement

Evidence:
- Policies/procedures prohibiting conflict of interests among employees and board members ✓

Rationale: SOU follows the Oregon Code of Conduct and has additional internal policies to prevent and address conflict of interest issues.

Standard 2.E.1

The institution utilizes relevant audit processes and regular reporting to demonstrate financial stability, including sufficient cash flow and reserves to achieve and fulfill its mission

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:
- Policies/procedures that articulate the oversight and management of financial resources ✓
- Latest external financial audit including management letter ✓
- Cash flow balance sheets ✗
- Audited financial statements ✓
- Tuition and fees, educational, and auxiliary revenue for undergraduate and graduate enrollments ✓
- Significant contracts/grants ✓
- Endowment and giving reports ✓
- Investment revenue ✓

Rationale: SOU provided documentation to demonstrate regular audits of financial status and that budgets are being managed according to policies. In FY2021, FTE students declined by 10.7% from FY2020. Since FY2017, FTE students has declined by 16.2%. Enrollment decline was impacted by COVID19 as well as unprecedented wildfires in this area. Auxiliary revenues have declined by 37% between FY2019 and FY2021 primarily as a result of COVID19. The president has acknowledged enrollment decline and SOU has responded well to these circumstances so far. Endowments and restricted funds have remained stable.

Standard 2.E.2

Financial planning includes meaningful opportunities for participation by stakeholders and ensures appropriate available funds, realistic development of financial resources, and comprehensive risk management to ensure short term financial health and long-term financial stability and sustainability.

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:
- Policies / procedures for planning and monitoring of operating and capital budgets, reserves, investments, fundraising, cash management, debt management, transfers and borrowing between funds ✓

Rationale: SOU demonstrates the use of consistent financial planning and annual budgeting with the input of multiple stakeholders through multiple boards and committees.

Standard 2.E.3

Financial resources are managed transparently in accordance with policies approved by the institution's governing board(s), governance structure(s), and applicable state and federal laws.

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:
- Description of internal financial controls ✓
- Board approved financial policies, state financial policies, or system financial policies ✓

Rationale: SOU provided board statements and polices on internal financial controls that demonstrate sound management and transparency.

Standard 2.F.1

Faculty, staff, and administrators are apprised of their conditions of employment, work assignments, rights and responsibilities, and criteria and procedures for evaluation, retention, promotion, and termination.

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:
- Human resource policies / procedures ✓
- Policies/procedures related to teaching, scholarship, service, and artistic creation ✓
- Policies/procedures for apprising employees of working conditions, rights and responsibilities, evaluation, retention, promotion, and termination ✓

Rationale: SOU follows the collective bargaining agreements and has internal policies and trainings to address working conditions for professional and part-time staff including students.

Standard 2.F.2

The institution provides faculty, staff, and administrators with appropriate opportunities and support for professional growth and development.

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:

- Employee professional development policies/procedures ✓

Rationale: SOU has policies and demonstrates regular practices that support professional development with staff including financial support, tuition benefits, and internal advancement opportunities.

Standard 2.F.3

Consistent with its mission, programs, and services, the institution employs faculty, staff, and administrators sufficient in role, number, and qualifications to achieve its organizational responsibilities, educational objectives, establish and oversee academic policies, and ensure the integrity and continuity of its academic programs.

Team Verification: Needs improvement

Evidence:

- Documentation about engagement and responsibilities specified for faculty and staff, as appropriate ✓
- Personnel hiring policy/procedures ✓
- Academic organizational chart ✓
- Administrator/staff /faculty evaluation policies/procedures✓

Rationale: SOU provided polices related to recruitment and retention of qualified administrators.

Standard 2.F.4

Faculty, staff, and administrators are evaluated regularly and systematically in alignment with institutional mission and goals, educational objectives, and policies and procedures. Evaluations are based on written criteria that are published, easily accessible, and clearly communicated. Evaluations are applied equitably, fairly, and consistently in relation to responsibilities and duties. Personnel are assessed for effectiveness and are provided feedback and encouragement for improvement.

Team Verification: Needs improvement

Evidence:

- Administrator/staff/faculty evaluation policies/procedures ✓

Rationale: SOU provided policies for annual performance reviews for faculty and staff.

Standard 2.G.1

Consistent with the nature of its educational programs and methods of delivery, and with a particular focus on equity and closure of equity gaps in achievement, the institution creates and maintains effective learning environments with appropriate programs and services to support student learning and success.

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:

- Listing of programs and services supporting student learning needs ✓

Rationale: SOU provided evidence of a commitment to equity and comprehensive support for students through its mission, policies, and a variety of student support services including information about basic needs, academic resources, and a Social Justice Equity Center.

Standard 2.G.2

The institution publishes in a catalog, or provides in a manner available to students and other stakeholders, current and accurate information that includes: institutional mission; admission requirements and procedures; grading policy; information on academic programs and courses, including degree and program completion requirements, expected learning outcomes, required course sequences, and projected timelines to completion based on normal student progress and the frequency of course offerings; names, titles, degrees held, and conferring institutions for administrators and full-time faculty; rules and regulations for conduct, rights, and responsibilities; tuition, fees, and other program costs; refund policies and procedures for students who withdraw from enrollment; opportunities and requirements for financial aid; and the academic calendar.

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:

Catalog (and/or other publications) that provides information regarding:

- Institutional mission ✓
- Admission requirements and procedures ✓
- Grading policy ✓

- Information on academic programs and courses, including degree and program completion requirements, expected learning outcomes, required course sequences, and projected timelines to completion ✓
- Names, titles, degrees held, and conferring institutions for administrators and full-time faculty ✓
- Rules and regulations for conduct, rights, and responsibilities ✓
- Tuition, fees, and other program costs ✓
- Refund policies and procedures for students who withdraw from enrollment ✓
- Opportunities and requirements for financial aid ✓
- The academic calendar ✓

Rationale: SOU's catalog is comprehensive and updated regularly. Curriculum requirements, tuition and aid, and services are all available and the webpage is easy to navigate.

Standard 2.G.3

Publications and other written materials that describe educational programs include accurate information on national and/or state legal eligibility requirements for licensure or entry into an occupation or profession for which education and training are offered. Descriptions of unique requirements for employment and advancement in the occupation or profession shall be included in such materials.

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:

Samples of publications and other written materials that describe:
- Accurate information on national and/or state legal eligibility requirements for licensure or entry into an occupation or profession for which education and training are offered ✓
- Descriptions of unique requirements for employment and advancement in the occupation or profession shall be included in such materials ✓

Rationale: SOU provided a number of examples of program information that supports compliance with this standard.

Standard 2.G.4

The institution provides an effective and accountable program of financial aid consistent with its mission, student needs, and institutional resources. Information regarding the categories of financial assistance (such as scholarships, grants, and loans) is published and made available to prospective and enrolled students.

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:
- Published financial aid policies/procedures including information about categories of financial assistance ✓
- Information to students regarding repayment obligations ✓
- Policies / procedures for monitoring student loan programs ✓

Rationale: SOU's office of Financial Aid provides clear information on the website regarding types of aid, repayment considerations, and additional resources.

Standard 2.G.5

Students receiving financial assistance are informed of any repayment obligations. The institution regularly monitors its student loan programs and publicizes the institution's loan default rate on its website.

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:
- Published financial aid policies/procedures including information about categories of financial assistance ✓
- Information to students regarding repayment obligations ✓
- Policies / procedures for monitoring student loan programs ✓
- Loan default rate published on website ✓

Rationale: SOU provides information about loan repayments with other consumer information and links to the Department of Education for cohort default rates and has updated this site with the current rate for the institution.

Standard 2.G.6

The institution designs, maintains, and evaluates a systematic and effective program of academic advisement to support student development and success. Personnel responsible for advising students are knowledgeable of the curriculum, program and graduation requirements, and are adequately prepared to successfully fulfill their responsibilities. Advising requirements and responsibilities of advisors are defined, published, and made available to students.

Team Verification: Needs improvement

Evidence:
- Description of advising program, staffing, and advising publications (Student handbook or Catalog; links to webpages – please note specific pages or areas) ✓
- Systematic evaluation of advising ✗
- Professional development policies / procedures for advisors ✗

Rationale: SOU provided information about a variety of academic advising resources and programs but information about regular evaluation of these programs along with professional development approaches was not.

Standard 2.G.7

The institution maintains an effective identity verification process for students enrolled in distance education courses and programs to establish that the student enrolled in such a course or program is the same person whose achievements are evaluated and credentialed. The institution ensures that the identity verification process for distance education students protects student privacy and that students are informed, in writing at the time of enrollment, of current and projected charges associated with the identity verification process.

Note: Institutions should refer to NWCCU Distance Education Policy for guidance and definitions related to the required evidence.

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:
- Policies/procedures for ensuring identity verification for students enrolling in distance education courses ✓

Rationale: SOU provided policies and procedures that demonstrate a focus on identity verification including multi-factor authentication and an internal portal for learning management systems.

Standard 2.H.1

Consistent with its mission, the institution employs qualified personnel and provides access to library and information resources with a level of currency, depth, and breadth sufficient to support and sustain the institution's mission, programs, and services.

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:
- Procedures for assessing adequacy of library collections ✓
- Library planning committee and procedures for planning and collection development ✓
- Library instruction plan; policies/procedures related to the use of library and information resources ✓
- Library staffing information; policies/procedures that explains faculty/library partnership for assuring library and information resources are integrated into the learning process ✓

Rationale: SOU has polices to regularly evaluate the library resources and staff and committees to operate.

Standard 2.I.1

Consistent with its mission, the institution creates and maintains physical facilities and technology infrastructure that are accessible, safe, secure, and sufficient in quantity and quality to ensure healthful learning and working environments that support and sustain the institution's mission, academic programs, and services.

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:
Facilities master plan, including:
- Equipment replacement policies/procedures ✓
- Procedures for assessing sufficiency of physical facilities ✓
- Policies and procedures for ensuring accessible, safe, and secure facilities ✓
- Policies/procedures for the use, storage, and disposal of hazardous waste ✓
- Technology master plan and planning processes ✓

Rationale: SOU provided a number of policies and procedures that address master planning, evaluation and upkeep of facilities and infrastructure, and plans for updates and replacement. Computer equipment is leased and replaced every four years.

Concluding Comments

The panel greatly appreciated a clear and detailed report that readily included evidence links and comprehensive narrative descriptions.

The panel noted that there is a clear format for university polices that include dates of regular reviews and descriptions of updates. However, there is a deficiency in that on a number of policies there was an indication that a review was to have taken place in the recent past and the policies

posted on the website were possibly outdated and the most recent policies appear to not have been made available on the website for access by stakeholders. It was also noted that a new system for maintaining policies will be available in 2023 but the panel would suggest reviewing the website for any updates needed.

The panel encourages continuous monitoring of financial resources in the wake of enrollment declines.