

May 24, 2022 Faculty Senate Meeting

President's Report – Submitted by: Jay Kenton, Interim President

Thank you for your service to WOU – we could not do this very important work without your ideas and participation.

COVID Update: I am hearing of more positive tests from folks at WOU, including my own test. Everyone needs to take added precautions. Guidance is that Individuals have the tools to mitigate their risks if they choose to use them. We have a Safety Team meeting on Monday May 23, 2022, thus I will report on any guidance that comes from that meeting. Polk county has moved to “medium risk.” At a minimum, we will likely move to “masks suggested” as opposed to “masks not required.” Staff Senate has asked that we consider extending the COVID leave deadline beyond June 30, 2022. This will be discussed in President's Cabinet this week and a campus notice will be sent after that is determined. Be safe out there.

Presidential update – I was as surprised as anyone about this news. The Board is working hard on an alternative solution. I expect more news on this front will be forthcoming soon. I will revise my plans as needed to ensure that WOU has the requisite leadership during the transition.

Enrollment Update – as of Monday May 16, 2022 applications were up 13.6% over last year and admits are up 5.1% over last year with 586 pending applications that are either incomplete in terms of documentation or that require additional review and consideration. EAB is working hard to find added graduate and returning adult students and Shorelight is recruiting international students for WOU and have produced at least 2 international student applications to date. We are also working on improved orientation and advising processes that should improve both yield and retention/persistence efforts.

Racial Incidents, Anger and Fear – We are investigating what occurred with the muralist last week. My campuswide e-mail has brought mixed responses with many supporting it, but some have disagreed and felt my e-mail was racist. Some have indicated that they are afraid and want to know what we will do to ensure that Black and Lavender Graduation ceremonies are safe. Most of the Cabinet members plan to attend these events and we have asked Campus Public Safety to increase patrols during these activities. I am also asking you to help where you can; be present, help us monitor the situation, etc. If you see someone harassing another, please intervene if you can and support the person being harassed. Our students have worked hard to get to this point and they deserve to have a safe place to celebrate their achievements.

Campus Murals - Western is fortunate to have two outstanding Portland-based artists on our campus this week. One artist, Jahdi, is currently working on his mural inside the WUC lobby and the other artist, Hector Hernandez, is finishing his art installation outside the Welcome Center. These art installations are celebrations of the various identities represented at WOU. Please give a warm WOU welcome to these artists.

The impetus for the mural in the WUC comes from Movimiento Estudiantil Chicanx de Aztlán (MEChA) De Western Oregon University a student organization that promotes higher education, cultura (culture), and historia (history).

The mural is seen as one step towards achieving WOU's goal of cultivating an inclusive campus climate that supports and celebrates the culture of a wide range of backgrounds, ethnicities, abilities, and identities. Jahdi, a distinguished Portland artist, is working on this beautiful and thoughtful mural and if you time it right, you might be able to see him at work in the lobby of the WUC.

The second art installation by Portland Artist Hector Hernandez also honors WOU's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Hector, whose art project is funded through the 1% for Art Program, talks about his artwork at the WOU Welcome Center, building mosaics, and the benefits of higher education. Hector and his crew are hard at work installing the final pieces of the entire artwork. Here's a link to a Hector's video: <https://youtu.be/5k09VJ7liec>

Thank you again for your service on the Faculty Senate this year.