

Oregon TECH

Communications and Outreach Guide for Major Issues and Projects at Oregon Tech

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Background

Communication and outreach around major projects and expenditures are always important, but even more so during periods of budget constraints. Ensuring a two-way communication process with stakeholders before and after a decision is an opportunity to clarify information about the project/issue and build trust that positively impacts the work of the university.

Approaches

Outlined below is a recommended two-way approach for Oregon Tech for communicating certain major projects and important issues to Oregon Tech's campus community that require additional outreach beyond standard approaches. Some issues/projects may from time to time benefit from additional outreach opportunities, such as a 2-way feedback process with relevant stakeholder groups, the results of which will be considered in the final decision-making on the issue/project.

Examples of issues/projects that may rise to the level of this type of two-way communications process to the campus community might include:

- Major capital or operations-based projects of \$1 million or greater that require Board of Trustees' approval, financial commitments in the short- or long-term, including cash expenditures, borrowing/bonding, debt
- Projects that have a major/significant impact on campus activities, events and reputation (branding), for example, and which might operate across multiple departments.

The process would include sharing, at appropriate intervals, consistent data, financial and other project information on the issue/project with stakeholders such as:

- Financial information, including pro formas, debt ratio impacts, how future financial commitments will be covered, description of use of funds parameters, and other information determined by the VP for Finance and Administration and other relevant executive staff members depending on the issue
- Impacts on enrollment, retention and graduation outcomes
- Impacts on academic and/or student affairs areas
- Impacts on other projects/issues of high value on campus, including how the new project will be prioritized with existing commitments/plans
- Assessment on implications of moving forward with project or not, including value added of completing the project and benefits for the campus community
- Determination of how the project aligns with the university's overall strategic plan and its shorter term goals and deliverables; the facilities master plan; the academic plan; or other documents.

The following university communication process will launch once an issue/project is identified:

1. Project/issue is presented to executive staff for review and make a determination of whether it meets the criteria of a major project/issue. Executive staff will determine feasibility, weigh value, discuss alternatives, discuss whether/how to move the project forward; determine stakeholders, optimal campus and stakeholder communication process, and determine detail and data needed for campus and board review. A project leader is named at this time to manage the process, either a member of the executive staff or designee.
2. If a determination is made to move forward, relevant committees and councils are given the opportunity to provide feedback through the President's Office or designated office on the project. Depending on the topic, committees and councils might include Faculty Senate, FOAC, Administrative Council, Provosts Leadership Team, ASOIT or relevant student group(s), and others as relevant to the topical area.
3. Campus forum(s), as relevant, may then be offered to faculty, staff and students; and depending on the project/issue, might also include external stakeholders.
4. Feedback from all of these meetings is collated and shared back to the campus community. The President communicates with Trustees along the way, as needed, as the campus outreach is being completed.
5. If issue/project moves forward, an analysis and report is compiled that is used as the basis for communicating the project to the campus community; and to the Board of Trustees, should it meet the financial threshold requirements or be deemed an issue of which the Board should be informed.

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