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A Comment for the Oregon Tech Board of Trustees

I wanted to write this short letter in the hopes that maybe a few of the new board members of this school might be able to get a better perspective of how one of the OIT students views the current situation of this institution. In short, I have one comment:

*Please be a little smarter than every other college has been with their tuition and funding strategies..*

I just read the "Tuition Strategy" section of the "Information to Support Tuition & Fee Requests" form and it seemed clear it was written without an accurate understanding of the state of the EE/CSET engineering programs. We do not have "state of the art" equipment. In most cases, we don't even have updated software. Our lab chairs are broken. Our carpet generates static electricity and fries our boards we work on. Do we have good equipment? Yes. But it's certainly not the newest and best out there. Most of it hasn't been updated in a long time.

At the top of page 4 of the Finance and Facilities Committee Agenda it suggests that this school "...attract[s] and retain[s] first-rate faculty and staff..." I don't really think this is the case. Many of the other faculty members in Purvine Hall seem to be teaching here because they couldn't find a job elsewhere or they were students here once and felt sorry for the school or they simply enjoy teaching and don't mind the pay cut. In general, they are good professors, but I really don't think they are the cream of the crop, like this document suggests.

As to the dropout and/or degree completion rates of the engineering programs, you should really understand what *kind* of students are showing up to these programs. Just because students are dropping out does not mean they need more funding to succeed. Actually, I would argue the opposite is true.

What if instead of always awarding need-based aid (referring to scholarships and grants, not loans), students were awarded aid based only on academic excellence. There are very few scholarships I've seen that are offered in the Oregon Tech Foundation applications which are merit-based awards. Instead you support those who are simply financially strapped. That sounds nice in the newspapers, but makes no sense if you think about it. You choose to support those students who may or may not drop out instead of filtering out those students who have chosen not to take their studies seriously. Personally, I do not come from a well-off family. We manage to make it month-to-month. I definitely appreciate any and all financial aid I can receive, but I get it for the wrong reasons.

The school has chosen to settle for apathetic students instead of encouraging those who do well to do better. This is not high school version 2.0, but if you walk through Purvine and listen to the average conversation, that's what it sounds like. This memo encouraging you to increase the tuition of engineering programs makes it sound like the students of OIT are studious and dedicated, but I know for a fact that the opposite is true. I would suggest that this GPA funding threshold not be set terribly high, but high enough to show that good effort. Maybe a GPA of 3.1 or 3.2 would be sufficient. You want your dropout rates to go down? Stop supporting those students who drop out. Maybe offer a testing substitution option for those older students who are coming back to college and didn't do so well in high school as an opportunity to show their knowledge. There are many ways to approach this problem, but, to put it frankly, shoving money down a dumb person's throat doesn't make him/her any smarter.

I guess when I applied to this school 2 ½ years ago, I did so with the assumption that things would be done smarter here because it's not a research school and seems to turn out decent people. Instead I've seen the same apathy you can find anywhere else, both in the student body and the leadership. I would hope that this governing board would not take the easy route, but instead choose the smarter route for the benefit of the students they are supposed to be serving.

I want to be proud of this school but currently, I can't really say that I am. I went to a community college for 3 years and I felt much better served as a student, there. I keep thinking that at a bigger school at least I might have a sturdy chair to sit in.

Thank you,

Alex Hogen