

April 20, 2021

Statement on Strength, Resilience, and Stability at Oregon Tech

University communities always have been, and always should be, places where spirited debate and academic freedom are celebrated as central to the learning experience of the students we serve. Oregon Tech believes strongly in these concepts. People with divergent perspectives and divergent interests need not always agree. Diversity of viewpoints is not a weakness; it is a strength.

The Board of Trustees is the final University authority and has full control of the University and fiduciary responsibility. However, we have delegated day-to-day authority for administration of the University to the President. Each year, we set the priorities for the President, hold the President accountable to those priorities, and evaluate the President based on performance. In addition, the Board conducts a comprehensive evaluation of the President, usually every four to five years.

We value and support our students, our faculty, our President and his administration, and all Oregon Tech employees. We can and do provide a world-class polytechnic education. And we can have passionate advocates within our ranks urging us to do better. There is no inconsistency in this.

First, let us all reaffirm our commitment to our students. We truly believe in our foundational university value of student success, prioritizing student and graduate success in every decision or action at every level of the University. And we hold everyone at Oregon Tech to this standard. Every action made should be made with this question in mind: “how will this help our students?” Let us always remember this question as we engage in our individual and collective decision making. Our students are our number one priority.

Second, we reaffirm our commitment to our faculty. We support our faculty as they engage, educate, and enlighten our students. Faculty at colleges and universities across the country are under tremendous stress. This is a reality. We can and should support faculty as they grapple with these stresses while providing tremendous value to our students. Our faculty are a huge part of our success.

Third, we reaffirm our commitment to President Naganathan. Challenging times call for dynamic leadership. Changing times also create real stresses. We are confident in

Dr. Naganathan's ability to help Oregon Tech navigate the 21st Century educational landscape, and to grow Oregon Tech into a world-class polytechnic institution. Consider these achievements during Dr. Naganathan's tenure: our first doctoral program (DPT), the CEEIT, renovation of first-class laboratory spaces in Cornett Hall, OMIC, a vibrant and engaging strategic plan, the executive think tank, the new track campaign, the diversity, inclusion and equity initiatives, an increase in scholarships awarded, the remodeled student recreation center, and many more accomplishments. Visionary leaders often face internal and external challenges, but what makes them so unique and successful is their dedication to their vision and in this case, the mission of the University. Being a leader is not a popularity contest, it is an exercise in humility; it calls for service to others and demands calm in the storm. Dr. Naganathan is such a leader and Oregon Tech and our students are better off with him at the helm.

Fourth, we reaffirm our commitment to all our employees, and to our communities. Our relationships within our communities, the state and region have continuously grown, and Oregon Tech is becoming a renowned University. Our staff and our community partners play a vital role in that growth and we commend each of them for their dedication and service.

While we will move forward together, we hear and appreciate the Faculty's concerns. Their feelings are real. The common threads relate to communication and culture. These are important issues that deserve thorough, thoughtful, and objective analysis. We think it is critical for these issues to be assessed objectively. Accordingly, we are directing Dr. Naganathan to retain the services of a qualified outside consultant to conduct a comprehensive climate assessment of the University, and to make recommendations for constructive initiatives to address any issues identified. We envision a report that considers all stakeholders, including students, faculty, staff, alumni, and members of the communities that we serve.

Finally, we recognize the truth in the phrase an ASOIT leader coined at an Oregon Tech Board meeting, "We are Oregon Tech Together." This was not a catch phrase developed on Madison Avenue. It was a heartfelt expression from one of our own, made to the Board, urging our University forward. We celebrate that strength, that spirit and that determination. We are Oregon Tech Together.