



**PSU Alumni
Association**

PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY

PSU Alumni Advocates History

1980's

Before PSU Advocates: Some PSU Days in Salem but no active advocacy effort.

1989

Threat to Portland State's existence -- A "blue ribbon commission" appointed by the governor received a recommendation from the American Electronic Association that PSU be divided between the University of Oregon and Oregon State. The Alumni Board immediately launched an all-out lobbying effort to showcase Portland State and its importance to the region. This was the beginning of PSU Advocates and it has continued since then to be an important committee of the Alumni Board.

1990-1991

Advocates concentrated a more than year-long effort lobbying members of the commission, the city council, and the legislature; testifying at commission hearings, etc., until PSU's new president, Judith Ramaley, was able to work out a compromise with the commission chair, establishing a coalition of urban-serving universities, including most in the Portland area, that also included a collaboration of university libraries, still in existence.

Fall 1995

Another threat to PSU's existence – Story breaks in The Oregonian of a proposal to solve many of higher education's problems by having either or both the University of Oregon and Oregon State take over PSU. Thus began year-long struggle to save the University, headed by PSU Advocates.

- Advocates launch letter-writing campaign demanding a thorough study of higher education issues before any action is taken. The result: Letters to the editor in papers all over the state; editorial support in The Oregonian, The Astorian, and the Statesman Journal; and growing support from area legislators.

1996

In response to Advocates' efforts, Chancellor then proposes thorough study of higher education, naming several task forces to conduct the effort. Study completed in May 1996.

- Advocates, assisted by many volunteers, cover these meetings to monitor what's happening as well as making the Oregon State System of Higher Education Board (OSSHE) aware of our concern.
- June: Alumni Board sponsors very effective four-week ad campaign in The Oregonian and Business Journal, highlighting outstanding alums – to remind OSSHE Board and the business community of importance of PSU to metro area.

June 1996

The Chancellor recommends merging PSU's School of Engineering with OSU and relinquishing some of PSU's graduate business programs to the University of Oregon. The threat to the Engineering School is clear. The Advocates organize their campaign:

- Notify PSU President Ramaley that the Advocates, acting independent of the University, will campaign to keep PSU's School of Engineering.
- June through October: Send out letters/alerts to a growing list of Advocates and supporters asking them to write letters to newspapers and OSSHE Board members, to contact their legislators, etc. Receive a strong, supportive response.
- Put together a PSU Fact Book, emphasizing PSU's importance to metro area. Sent to Advocates' growing mailing list/use in contacts with decision makers.
- In response to Advocates' efforts, County Commissioner Tanya Collier, a PSU graduate, succeeds in getting a resolution strongly in support of PSU's position passed by Metro Council; Multnomah, Washington and Clackamas Counties; and the cities of Portland and Gresham.

Sept. 1996

Advocates meet with The Oregonian's editorial board making the case for considering all options – not just merging Engineering School with OSU. Result: Oregonian editorial strongly in favor of PSU's position. The Chancellor then appoints a sub-committee to hear other proposals for solution to Engineering issue.

- September-October: Launch joint effort with PSU Foundation calling on metro business leaders to discuss importance of PSU to the business community.
- Advocates ask alums and PSU friends who are business leaders in metro area, to write personal letters to individual OSSHE Board members in support of PSU. Advocates also meet personally with metro-area legislators.
- October: Advocates call on each OSSHE Board member individually, using people with whom they are acquainted whenever possible.
- November, Alumni Association again sponsors series of advertisements in The Oregonian, featuring outstanding PSU alums.

Nov. 1996

OSSHE Board agenda published, indicating Board to take action on engineering issue before hearing other options. Meeting set for November 15th.

- Alert current/former Alumni Board members, other PSU supporters, and metro area legislators, asking them to attend OSSHE Board meeting. And they did!
- Advocates send letter of protest to Editor of The Oregonian, which is published in the paper on the day before the meeting.

Tom Imeson, OSSHE Board vice-chair, presents a compromise establishing a statewide school of engineering, using both public and private resources while maintaining the integrity of each campus. Decision ratified by Board in December. A win for PSU!

1997

Funding for PSU's new Urban Center – This was PSU's priority for the 1997 legislative session. Advocates organized letter-writing campaigns, visits to legislators, and PSU Day in Salem focused on the Center. Then, near the end of session, the Center's funding was suddenly in jeopardy. Launched immediate

concentrated effort of personal phone calls and visits to key legislators. Advocates succeed in saving needed funding.

1999

Successful rally for University funding held in Salem – With the blessing of, and at the suggestion of the Speaker of the House, PSU Advocates, aided by PSU’s student government, organized a huge rally supporting higher education in Salem during the Legislative session. Supported by all OUS schools, the turnout was the largest in support of the university system to that date and it did have an effect. The result: More funding that year for Oregon’s universities.

Spring 2007

Ballot Measure 41 – Advocates led campus-wide coalition opposed to this measure which would have had a very negative impact on Oregon revenues and certainly on funding for higher education. Worked with campus coalition (SEIU, APSU, PSUF, AAUP, etc.) to educate their members and raise funds for ads in The Oregonian and opposition statement in Voters Pamphlet. Advocate chair also served as member of the Defend Oregon PAC (statewide opposition group) steering committee. Ultimately, Ballot Measure 41 was defeated. At same time, Advocates also sponsored several well-attended open forums at PSU on this and other controversial ballot measures, providing pro and con speakers.

2008-09

University of Oregon’s effort to take over “Made in Oregon” sign – This was a difficult challenge as the U of O had the backing of the sign’s Old Town neighborhood, as well as the support of prominent Portland U of O alums. Advocates, acting as Portland citizens rather than engaging in a turf war, opposed U of O’s effort to change Portland’s iconic sign to read “University of Oregon.” Met with City Commissioners testified before the Historic Landmarks Commission and City Council, and put the issue on Facebook, gaining 30,000 supporters. Final outcome: a compromise – the sign now reads “Portland, Oregon.”

2010-17

To increase the capacity to meet the growing student population, Portland State initialed an aggressive effort to secure capital bond funding for improving and increasing facilities. PSU Advocates partnered with other University entities to successfully fund the School of Business, Viking Pavilion, Neuberger Hall, and the School of Education. The PSU Advocates worked tirelessly to convince the Legislature that reinvesting in Oregon’s University System was necessary. PSU Advocates lobbied to keep tuition increases to a minimum. We were successful in maintaining Opportunity Grants for low-income students and Oregon Sports Lottery funding.