Academic and Student Affairs Committee Meeting

Academic and Student Recreation Center (ARSC) - PSU Urban Plaza
University Conference Room - 515
Thursday, 9/8/2016
2:00 - 5:00 PM PT

1. Call to Order / Roll / Declaration of Quorum  (2:00 p.m. to 2:05 p.m.)
   Standing
   Presented by: Margaret Kirkpatrick, Chair

2. 6-22-16 ASAC Meeting Notes  (2:05 p.m. to 2:10 p.m.)
   Approval
   Presented by: Margaret Kirkpatrick, Chair
   ASAC Meeting Minutes 6-22-16 DRAFT - Page 2

3. NWCCU Year One Report  (2:10 p.m. to 2:50 p.m.)
   Approval
   Presented by: Sona Andrews, Provost
   NWCCU Year One Report FINAL 8.31.2016 - Page 4

4. reTHINK and Provost Challenge Update  (2:50 p.m. to 3:20 p.m.)
   Presentation and Discussion
   Presented by: Sukhwant Jhaj, Vice Provost for Academic Innovation and Student Success
   reTHINK and Provost Challenge Webpage - Page 28

5. Strategic Plan Sub-Initiative Review - Initiative 1.1.4 on Student Wellness  (3:20 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.)
   Presentation and Discussion
   Presented by: John Fraire, Vice President for Enrollment Management and Student Affairs
   OPB Article - Many Students Are Young In College and Homeless - Page 29
MEETING NOTES

Committee members present: Chair Margaret Kirkpatrick, Sho Dozono, Maude Hines, Maria Carolina Gonzalez-Prats, Pete Nickerson, Lindsay Stewart, Sona Andrews (ex-officio, non-voting), Wim Wiewel (ex-officio, non-voting)

Committee members not present: Vice Chair Swati Adarkar and John Fraire (ex-officio, non-voting)

Committee staff present: Vanelda Hopes

1. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL/DECLARATION OF QUORUM
Margaret Kirkpatrick, Chair of the Academic and Student Affairs Committee (ASAC), called the meeting to order at 2:06 p.m. Trustee Kirkpatrick declared a quorum was present. The meeting was convened.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES—ACTION
Action: Trustee Lindsay Stewart moved that the committee approve the minutes from the May 11, 2016 ASAC meeting. Trustee Maria Carolina Gonzalez-Prats seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.

3. EQUITY LENS CASE STUDY
Carmen Suarez, Vice President, Global Diversity & Inclusion gave an overview of her career and noted that in the national landscape of diversity relations, specifically on university campuses, PSU provides a wide range of student services, and is actively working to improve curriculum and pedagogy in the classroom to include and respect all communities of students. An Equity Lens Assessment Tool was created during the PSU Strategic Planning process in order to review the goals through the lens of race and ethnicity and through the lens of marginalized communities including but not limited to persons with disabilities, women, transgender and gender non-conforming persons, and those in the LGBTQ community. Examples of how Multnomah County and the Education Investment Board use an equity lens and a case study were discussed by the group.

Action: The committee will have the Equity Lens Assessment Tool questions available for discussion and decision making at each Academic and Student Affairs Committee meeting going forward.

4. COMPREHENSIVE CAMPAIGN/BIG IDEA STATUS REPORT
Provost Andrews provided an overview of the Big Ideas for PSU’s Comprehensive Campaign. The recent addition of the Climate Change, Resilience and Sustainability Big Idea brings the total number of ideas to-date to seven, and includes Transforming Lives and Community Through Civic Engagement, Entrepreneurship, Smart Cities, Public Health, Center/Institute for Race and Inclusion, and Creating the Epicenter of STEM Education Excellence. Currently the campaign is in the leadership phase and the foundation will be testing the seven themes to see which resonate and determining if they have lead donors.
5. **Review of Timeline for Consolidated Strategic Plan Sub-Initiatives**

Trustee Kirkpatrick reviewed the consolidated strategic plan report. The committee will prioritize the 12 items and decide what questions to ask and what information to review for each item in order to determine baseline and outcomes.

**Action:** Vanelda Hopes, Executive Assistant to the Provost, will send a survey out to the committee to collect their recommendations and Trustee Kirkpatrick will use the survey results to schedule the sub-initiatives for meeting discussion.

6. **Student/Faculty Presentations at Meetings**

There was a request at a recent Board meeting that faculty/union members be added to Board of Trustee committees as voting members. General Counsel Reese is looking into best practices from other institutions. Trustee Kirkpatrick noted that she would like to invite faculty, staff and students who are specialists in the topic areas when the committee reviews each of the strategic plan sub-initiatives.

7. **Faculty Senate Academic Quality Taskforce**

Linda George, Professor, Environmental Science Management and Chair, Faculty Senate Taskforce on Academic Quality explained the 2014 Faculty Senate resolution charge to create a taskforce to identify and describe PSU’s aspirational comparators. However, after working to find comparative institutions, the charge was modified to identify aspirational practices instead. The taskforce has surveyed faculty, identified aspirational practices and potential indicators, explored case studies to examine implementation of aspirational practices at other institutions, and made preliminary recommendations for implementation at PSU. This process yielded five aspirational practices which include undergraduate research, graduate experience, writing, interdisciplinary teaching and research, and support for faculty scholarly activities. This taskforce was approved as a standing Faculty Senate committee at the June 2016 Faculty Senate Meeting.

**Action:** Professor George will be invited to attend an Academic and Student Affairs Committee meeting in the spring of 2017 to give an update on the work of the Academic Quality Committee.

8. **Other and Adjournment**

Trustees Kirkpatrick and Gonzalez-Prats noted that the trustees who were able to attend the tour of the Native American Student and Community Center with Dr. Cornel Pewewardy, Director of Indigenous Nation Studies, on June 7 had a great meeting. Trustee Gonzalez-Prats asked that the university move forward with creating a MOU between the Indigenous Nations and PSU, and Provost Andrews noted that a meeting including President Wiewel, Vice President Carmen Suarez, and her is scheduled.

Trustee Kirkpatrick reminded the committee that Trustee Gonzalez-Prats’ term will end on June 30, 2016, and thanked her for her dedicated service both to the board and committee.

With no further comments or questions from the committee, Trustee Kirkpatrick adjourned the meeting.
Year One
Self-Evaluation Report

Prepared for the
Northwest Commission
On Colleges and Universities
by
Portland State University

September 15, 2016
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Institutional Overview

Portland State University occupies a unique position in Oregon and plays a crucial role in the metropolitan region that it serves. As the state’s premier urban research and teaching university, we have a well-defined mission to positively impact Portland and the broader community through educational access, engagement with local partners and the expertise of our top-quality faculty and staff.

Founded in 1946 as a college for returning World War II veterans, PSU has grown to offer more than 200 degrees and has become the most diverse public university in Oregon. We serve more than 28,000 students, including a significant number from historically marginalized and underrepresented racial and ethnic backgrounds, students with disabilities, working parents, first-generation students, international students, veterans and returning students. We also attract a large percentage of students who transfer from community colleges or other universities. We are an access institution that offers a quality liberal arts education as well as professional, graduate and doctoral programs. We consider our diversity an integral part of how we define academic excellence.

Based on our curriculum, faculty and dedication to community engagement, PSU is widely perceived as a national model for how universities can partner with their cities to solve problems and improve quality of life. Beginning in the early 1990s, PSU defined and embraced its identity as an innovative and engaged institution. Its location in the heart of downtown Portland, Oregon, enables the university and the city to maintain long-term collaborative partnerships, fostering community-based learning experiences for students and engaging faculty in applied teaching and research opportunities. We are among 240 universities that have achieved the Carnegie Community Engagement classification.

Placed on a sky bridge over a major downtown thoroughfare, the PSU’s motto, “Let Knowledge Serve the City,” reflects the importance we place on PSU’s relationship with the city and the region.

PSU’s innovative general education curriculum, University Studies1, is nationally acclaimed for its integration of community engagement and interdisciplinary teaching and learning across the four years of the program. Partnerships with other higher education institutions in the region, such as Oregon Health & Sciences University, and with public and private organizations, such as the Portland Development Commission and Portland General Electric, create opportunities for faculty and students to engage in cutting-edge research in a variety of areas, including health and sustainability-related fields, business, urban planning, engineering and social work. Connections with the city’s arts community enables students to learn from professional artists in a thriving urban environment. The joint emphasis of PSU and the City of Portland on sustainable urban futures provides a laboratory for applied research on transportation and energy alternatives and the development of social and political networks that support environmentally-conscious policies and systems.

PSU also has received national attention for its innovative reTHINK PSU2 initiative. PSU launched the initiative four years ago to address the growing challenges facing public urban universities, including the decreases in state funding, rising costs, the increasingly diverse and cost-conscious students, growth in online education and providing student centered services. This campus-wide effort has sparked significant changes to the way PSU delivers education and supports student success. Since the initiative began, the University has awarded more than $4.5 million to faculty and staff to advance new ideas related to programs and student support, including launching a new PSU Online website, developing new

1 https://www.pdx.edu/unst/home
2 http://www.pdx.edu/oaa/rethinkpsu
flexible degrees – both hybrid and fully online - and a significant revamping of the student advising system. These efforts are proving to make PSU increasingly focused on student persistence and degree completion.

Central to PSU’s mission are strong graduate programs. The University offers a variety of educational and research opportunities through more than 70 masters and 20 doctoral programs, and PSU serves more graduate students than any other institution in Oregon. The growing research enterprise creates opportunities for faculty and graduate students to create new knowledge and to work with community partners in applying knowledge to real-world problems. External funding for our research has increased by an average of 8 percent per year over the past seven years. In fiscal year 2015, PSU received sponsored awards totaling $64.6 million.

Table 1 shows the magnitude of growth in enrollment, research, programs and space over the past 10 years.

Table 1. Growth at Portland State University from 2000-2001 to 2015-2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2000-2001</th>
<th>2015-2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Enrollment</td>
<td>20,026</td>
<td>29,057</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Expenditures</td>
<td>$26.4m</td>
<td>$62.5m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Programs</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-Time Faculty</td>
<td>590</td>
<td>864</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-Time Faculty</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>718</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Square footage</td>
<td>3.91m</td>
<td>5.18m</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 2015, President Wim Wiewel led a campus wide effort that produced a new five-year strategic plan and commits the university to dozens of new initiatives aimed at ensuring excellence, equity, innovation and community engagement. Included in the plan are revised and updated vision and mission statements to reflect PSU’s changing role in the state, national and global academic arena. The University’s vision is to lead the way to an equitable and sustainable future through academic excellence, urban engagement, and expanding opportunity for all. Yet, as the title of the plan emphasizes, PSU remains committed to its motto: “Let Knowledge Serve the City.” To enable PSU to fulfill its mission, in spring 2016, the University announced a new partnership – the College Affordability and Success Coalition – that is chaired by President Wiewel and composed of regional civic and business leaders. The stated goal of the Coalition is to raise a minimum of $25 million a year in new funding to support PSU scholarships and student success initiatives.

Institutional changes since filing of 2015 Year Seven Self-Evaluation Report

The most recent report submitted to NWCCU was the fall 2015 Year Seven Report. Since the last external site visit in fall 2015, the University has experienced a few changes in leadership. In May 2016, Dan Connolly announced his resignation as Dean of the School of Business, effective at the end of June.

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3 2014-15 is the most recent data available
Cliff Allen, previously the Associate Dean for Graduate Programs, was appointed as the new Dean of the School of Business Administration beginning in July. In June 2016, Jon Fink announced he is leaving his position as Vice President for Research and Strategic Partnerships. A search for a new VP will be undertaken during the 2016-17 academic year. In the interim period, Kevin Reynolds, Vice President for Finance and Administration assumed the title of Interim Vice President for Research and Strategic Partnerships; the Office of Research Development is reporting to Sona Andrews, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs; and the Institute for Sustainable Solutions is reporting to President Wiewel. In addition, Alan Kolibaba was promoted to serve as the Interim Associate Vice President for Research Finance and Administration.

Response to recommendations from 2015 Year Seven Report

On February 1, 2016, NWCCU reaffirmed PSU’s accreditation based on the Year Seven Self Evaluation Report and provided two recommendations. The recommendations and PSU’s responses to the recommendations are detailed below.

Recommendation 1: The evaluation committee noted the absence of the required Management letter (Management Discussion and analysis – MD&A), which should accompany PSU audited financial statements per GASB requirements and NWCCU standard 2.F.7. The evaluation committee recommends that PSU include the MD&A for current and future fiscal years to fully meet the standard.

Response to Recommendation 1: On March 3, 2016 PSU submitted its Ad Hoc Report to Address Recommendation 1 of the Fall 2015 Year Seven Peer-Evaluation. This included the completed externally audited financial statements and MD&A letter, and a conclusion that the recommendation had been met. On July 20, 2016 NWCCU confirmed the March 3, 2016 Ad Hoc report adequately addressed Recommendation 1 and the University was in compliance with Standard 2.F.7

Recommendation 2: The Assessment Table and interviews indicated that Portland State University does not yet regularly and comprehensively assess all student program learning outcomes for undergraduate and graduate programs (Standard 4.A.3). Additionally, graduate program student learning outcomes were not published for all graduate programs (Standard 2.C.2). The Commission recommends that the assessment of student learning outcomes be systematically accelerated such that continuous improvement resulting from assessment leads to enhancement of student achievement and to a meaningful evaluation of mission fulfillment (Standards 2.C.2, 4.A.3, and 4.B).

Response to Recommendation 2: The Office of Academic Affairs, in concert with the Office of Academic Innovation and the Institutional Assessment Council, immediately began drafting a plan to address the recommendation. Student Program Learning assessment is being systematically integrated into the Academic Program Review (APR) schedule, a process that results in a thorough review of all programmatic offerings. The Provost, Institutional Assessment Council, and the Office of Academic Innovation have strategically timed assessment work and administrative oversight meetings built into every APR schedule to ensure ongoing support, measurements and advising. Articulating the process and

4 http://www.pdx.edu/oaa/academic-program-review
level of success in meeting NWCCU recommendation 2 will be done through data reporting on the number of students assessed on different programs’ student learning outcomes, development thresholds, and progress toward APR completion. This effort will be served through a reporting system comprised of an APR dashboard, individual program cycle tracking, NWCCU assessment development threshold matrices, and program specific student learning outcomes assessment reporting.

Executive Summary of Eligibility Requirement 2 - Authority

In 1946, the Oregon State Board of Higher Education approved the Vanport Extension Center which became Portland State College in 1955. Portland State became a university on February 14, 1969 when then Governor Tom McCall signed Senate Bill No. 65 establishing the university. On August 14, 2013 the Oregon State Legislature passed Senate Bill No. 270, allowing the seven Oregon universities to operate independently of the Oregon University System and State Board of Higher Education, and establish their own Boards of Trustees. On May 27, 2014 NWCCU approved PSU’s governance change request, and on July 1, 2014 PSU began independent operations with its own Board of Trustees.

Executive Summary of Eligibility Requirement 3 - Mission and Core Themes

PSU’s mission was reviewed and adopted by the Oregon University System Board in 1991 and amended and approved in 1999. The Academic and Student Affairs Committee of the PSU Board of Trustees reaffirmed the mission and core themes at its June 4, 2014 meeting and the full Board approved them at its June 26, 2014. The mission statement was approved by the Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Commission on June 11, 2015.

In 2015, the mission statement was updated as an outcome of strategic planning. It was approved by the PSU Board of Trustees on December 10, 2015, the Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Commission on April 14, 2016 and by NWCCU on July 11, 2016.

The mission statement appears on the University’s website and in the University’s catalog, the Bulletin (Standard 1.A.1).

Institution Mission statement

Throughout 2015 the University conducted an in-depth process involving over 3,500 faculty, student, staff and community stakeholders that resulted in a new strategic plan for the years 2016-2020. On December 10, 2015 the PSU Board of Trustees voted to adopt the new mission and the NWCCU approved the new mission on July 11, 2016.

- We serve and sustain a vibrant urban region through our creativity, collective knowledge and expertise
- We are dedicated to collaborative learning, innovative research, sustainability and community engagement
- We educate a diverse community of lifelong learners
- Our research and teaching have global impact
Interpretation of Mission Fulfillment

On September 11, 2014, the PSU Board of Trustees approved a resolution that directed President Wiewel to develop a new strategic plan for the University. The last strategic plan was completed in 2011, culminating in 2011-14. The Board’s resolution called on the strategic planning process to build on PSU’s historical role and strength and its existing vision and mission, to engage broadly with internal and external stakeholders, and to be based on reasonable assumptions regarding resources.

Structure of PSU’s Strategic Planning Process

Comprised of over thirty administrative, faculty, student and staff representatives from across campus, the Strategic Plan Development Team worked for nearly eighteen months, conducting a long series of focus groups, surveys and social events to garner input on the new strategic plan. Topic teams formed around 8 key issues and regularly convened. Each topic team issued reports on the respective issues, which were then incorporated into the strategic plan. In total, over 3,500 faculty, staff, students, administrators and community members provided input on the plan during its development.

The 2016-20 Strategic Plan represents an important picture of PSU’s future direction. The set of five goals – Elevate Student Success, Advance Excellence in Teaching and Research, Extend Our Leadership in Community Engagement, Expand Our Commitment to Equity and, Innovate for Long Term Sustainability – serve as the core themes for the University. These core themes and the attendant

5 https://www.pdx.edu/strategic-plan
6 http://www.pdx.edu/president/engagement-topic-teams
Articulation of Mission Fulfillment

PSU will continue to be guided by its mission as it serves as the anchor institution in the Portland region, providing the surrounding communities with a highly educated population, substantial economic impact and distinctive contributions to its culture. The strategic planning process that was undertaken and strategic plan that was born of that process is an indication of PSU’s strong commitment to ensure that its mission is being actualized in ways that are meaningful and appropriate to all of its constituents. The interpretation of mission fulfillment is clear in the themes and indicators presented below, all of which demonstrate that through the collective action of students, faculty, and staff, PSU is consistent and clear on how it continually fulfills its mission.

Presented below are the objectives and indicators for each of five Core Themes, which serve as the foundation for the new Strategic Plan. The five Core Themes provide a means for organizing “achievements, outcomes and expectations” in fulfillment of the University’s mission as an engaged, urban-serving institution. In order to monitor progress toward mission fulfillment and to ensure accountability and improvement, specific objectives and indicators have been articulated under each theme to “…represent an acceptable threshold or extent of mission fulfillment.”

Based on the Core Themes, PSU recognizes the inherent requirement for continuous improvement. The generative and engaged process that produced the Strategic Plan goals, and thus the Core Themes, involved the major constituencies of the campus—students, staff, faculty, administration, and the Board of Trustees. This broad involvement established the process as a meaningful collaboration designed to regularly examine and evaluate the University’s mission. The indicators are all assessable since each Core Theme indicator is based on associated measures. Furthermore, many of the indicators are included in the University Evaluation Framework adopted by Oregon’s Higher Education Coordinating Commission and the Student Success and Completion Model enacted by the state legislature. PSU will continually validate the threshold levels by comparing them with national accountability standards such as the Student Achievement Measure (SAM).

Core Theme 1: Elevate Student Success - Provide a quality education and prepare students for careers and life in a global context.

As an urban-serving institution, PSU serves a diverse population of learners, including first-generation college students, transfer students, part-time students, non-traditional students, students of color, low-income students and international students. These students come to PSU as undergraduate students, graduate students as well as those seeking professional training for career advancement. This student diversity can challenge traditional measures of student success and calls for innovative strategies to ensure the achievement of educational goals. Initiatives such as flexible degrees, fully online degrees,  

8 NWCCU Standard 1.A.2
and credit for prior learning are some of the ways that PSU is adapting to meet the changing needs of students.

PSU sees student success as an ongoing process with a focus on continual improvement. By participation in collaborative, inter-institutional projects PSU hopes to learn from peer institutions and implement the best practices to continually improve the understanding of our students and how to best meet their needs for achieving academic success. As an example, PSU was the recipient of a Gates Foundation APLU/USU Grant\(^9\) to research, develop, and test new, scalable university business models that can increase access, improve success rates, and find greater cost efficiencies.

PSU’s commitment to student success includes several important dimensions which are reflected in the objectives listed below.

**Objectives**

| Core Theme 1. Elevate Student Success – Provide a quality education and prepare students for careers and life in a global context |
|---|---|
| **Objective** | **Indicator** |
| 1.1 Contain the cost of completing a degree at PSU. | 1.1.1 Average time to completion |
| | 1.1.2 Amount awarded in scholarships |
| | 1.1.3 Number of courses designated as low cost textbook courses |
| | 1.1.4 Percentage of students with remaining unmet financial need |
| 1.2 Monitor Progress Towards Graduation | 1.2.1 Graduation rate within six years for first-time, full-time freshmen and transfer students |
| | 1.2.2 Percentage of students retained |
| | 1.2.3 Percentage of Oregon Community College transfer students retained |
| | 1.2.4 Number of undergraduate degrees awarded |
| | 1.2.5 Number of master’s degrees awarded |
| 1.3 Clarify Academic Pathways | 1.3.1 Number of bachelor degrees awarded to transfer students from Oregon Community Colleges |
| | 1.3.2 Number of enrolled transfer students from Oregon Community Colleges |
| | 1.3.3 Number of Articulation Agreements with Community Colleges |
| | 1.3.4 Number of newly admitted Oregon Freshman entering with high school dual or other early college |

Expand culturally responsive and culturally specific supports for students from diverse communities.

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<tr>
<th>1.4</th>
<th>1.4.1 Number and Percent of enrolled students from diverse communities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4.2 Number and Percent of degrees awarded to students from diverse communities</td>
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To ensure student success both while enrolled and post-graduation, PSU offers a portfolio of high quality programs at both the graduate and undergraduate levels. In order to serve the unique needs of the diverse student body, the objectives for this core theme are based around tracking the student’s progress towards a degree and providing an educational experience for students that can impact their life and careers beyond their time at PSU.

We will examine these data points by tracking from year to year and looking at the three year trends for each.

**Objective 1.1: Contain the Cost of Completing a Degree at PSU**

PSU understands that the cost to attend can be a deterrent to students completing their degrees. The indicators used for this objective will be: Average time to completion for undergraduates (*indicator 1.1.1*), Amount awarded in scholarships (*indicator 1.1.2*), Number of courses designated as using Open Educational Resources (*indicator 1.1.3*), Percentage of students with remaining unmet financial need (*indicator 1.1.4*).

While tracking the average time to completion and the amount awarded in scholarships are straightforward indicators, the other two look at how PSU is actively seeking to help the student overcome the financial burdens of attending.

Low cost course materials (including Open Educational Resources (OER)) are an effort to reduce the overall financial burden on students. Courses with textbooks and/or course materials that cost $50 or less will contain the overall cost of completing a degree.

Unmet financial need is defined as the difference between the cost of attendance and the amount of financial aid received. Unmet need can be a major factor in students not continuing their studies. This indicator will identify the extent to which there are gaps in students’ abilities to cover the costs of their education at PSU.

These indicators will help PSU to understand the time and expenses incurred by students as they move through and complete their degree programs. This information can then be used to inform institutional decision-making that will help to contain the cost of completing a degree at PSU.
Objective 1.2: Monitor Progress Towards Graduation

Once students have enrolled at PSU, their progress towards graduation can be tracked by using indicators that focus on retention rates and graduation rates. The key data points are: Graduation rate within six years for first-time, full-time freshmen and transfer students (indicator 1.2.1), Percentage of students retained (indicator 1.2.2), Percentage of Oregon Community College transfer students retained (indicator 1.2.3), Number of undergraduate degrees awarded (indicator 1.2.4), and Number of master's degrees awarded (indicator 1.2.5).

By examining the data that looks at student progress, PSU can have a better understanding of where students stand on the path to graduation and what improvements or adjustments should be made.

Objective 1.3: Clarifying Academic Pathways

A key component to helping students achieve their academic goals is to clearly articulate the pathways to obtaining a degree. PSU uses advising and online degree maps to inform students and provide them with guidance along their path to graduation. Recognizing that a significant portion of our students transfer in from community colleges, PSU has developed relationships with regional community colleges to make the transfer to PSU as seamless and straightforward as possible. The use of Articulation Agreements ensure that both institutions understand how the transfer process works and which credits are transferrable.

The indicators for this objective are Number of bachelor degrees awarded to transfer students from Oregon Community Colleges (indicator 1.3.1), Number of enrolled transfer students from Oregon Community Colleges (indicator 1.3.2), Number of Articulation Agreements (indicator 1.3.3), Number of newly admitted Oregon Freshman entering with high school dual or other early college credit (indicator 1.3.4).

Objective 1.4: Expand Culturally Responsive and Culturally Specific Supports for Students from Diverse Communities.

The student body at Portland State is a diverse collection of students from many cultures and backgrounds. In order to meet the needs of these students, PSU has established resource centers where these students can seek academic or personal assistance. These centers include the Disability Resource Center, La Casa Latina, Multicultural Center, Native American Student and Community Center, Queer Resource Center, Resource Center for Students with Children, Veterans Resource Center, Women’s Resource Center, a new Asian/Pacific Islander Student Center, and a new Black Student Resource Center.

To improve cultural competency in the classroom, Portland State will expand trainings for faculty in which there is a review of curriculum and pedagogy. This training focuses on improving the
accessibility of course material and the effectiveness of the faculty members in serving the diverse needs of their students.

For this objective, diversity refers to ethnicity and race. PSU will look at the Number and Percent of enrolled students from diverse communities (indicator 1.4.1) and Number and Percent of degrees awarded to students from diverse communities (indicator 1.4.2). These indicators will be tracked year to year and over time to determine how effective the resources committed to students and faculty members are impacting the retention and degree completion of students from diverse communities.

Core Theme 2: Advance Excellence in Teaching and Research

As a focus of Portland State’s strategic plan, attracting and retaining the highest quality faculty and entrusting them with academic freedom is the best means of achieving PSU’s mission as a top urban research and teaching university. Enhanced emphases on professional development, academic advising and shared governance will further the impact and achievement of PSU faculty.

By reviewing PSU programs through the Academic Program Review process, which includes in-depth internal and external reviews and action plans, and by continuing the discipline-specific specialized accreditations, PSU is able to systematically assess its program offerings to ensure relevance and quality.

While its origin is as a teaching university, PSU’s commitment to research continues to grow; since 2006, the level of sponsored research increased by more than 50 percent. Our faculty members excel at conducting research in search of solutions to problems for the rapidly evolving Portland region and beyond.

Objectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Make professional development for all faculty an individual and institutional priority</td>
<td>2.1.1 Amount of funding provided for professional development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of the array of academic program offerings on a regular basis to ensure relevance, quality and equity</td>
<td>2.2.1 Of the disciplines that have specialized national accreditation available, the percentage of programs that are accredited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.2 Percent of programs reviewed with satisfactory progress on program review action plans after one year</td>
<td>2.3 Advance excellence in focused research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.1 Total sponsored project expenditures</td>
<td>2.3.2 Other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Objective 2.1: Make Professional Development for All Faculty an Individual and Institutional Priority

PSU values professional development as an essential investment in its employees. Providing professional development opportunities will not only help our faculty to reach their goals but also will help students by engaging them with new ideas, pedagogy and research opportunities.

By tracking the Amount of funding provided for professional development (*indicator 2.1.1*), we will be able to demonstrate the PSU’s commitment to professional development.

The Office of Academic Innovation (OAI) supports professional development on campus through workshops, trainings, coordination of peer mentoring, and other support functions in both individual and group settings. In partnership with the Office of Global Diversity and Inclusion, OAI works with faculty to enhance teaching environments, including curriculum, to ensure inclusion and affirmation for all students. By examining the Number of faculty interactions with the Office of Academic Innovation (*indicator 2.1.2*), we will be able to determine the extent to which faculty members are using this valuable campus resource.

### Objective 2.2: Assess the Array of Academic Program Offerings on a Regular Basis to Ensure Relevance, Quality and Equity

To assess program quality, PSU utilizes the Academic Program Review process as part of its NWCCU accreditation requirements and discipline-specific specialized accreditation from external organizations.

There are twenty three programs at PSU that are accredited by discipline-specific external agencies. The Office of Academic Affairs supports the efforts of the Schools and Colleges to ensure on-going accreditation of their specific programs. PSU will inventory the national accreditations available for its portfolio of programs. From that inventory, an indicator will reveal: Of the disciplines that have specialized national accreditation available, what is the percentage of programs that are accredited (*indicator 2.2.1*).

All academic programs at PSU undergo a coordinated and systematic Academic Program Review (APR) every seven years. The end result of this review is to develop an Action Plan that supports continuous improvement. The review process employed by PSU serves to track, review, measure, and assess each program to identify the successes and challenges of each program and identify its unique strengths. It provides a systematic way to improve programs by examining:

- Adequacy of resources needed to sustain a quality offering;
- Continued ability to address student access and market demand;
● Currency of the curriculum within the evolution of the discipline or field; and
● Success of the program in terms of student learning.

The APR process involves both an extensive self-study by the program and an in-depth review by external reviewers. Once the APR is completed, an Action Plan is developed in coordination with the Department Chair/Program Director, Dean, and the Provost. The Action Plan identifies what issues the program should address, how they will be addressed and by when. Follow up meetings with the Department Chair/Program Director, Dean and Provost are scheduled one year following the completion of the APR to ensure progress on the Action Plan. For this indicator, we will track the percent of programs reviewed with satisfactory progress on Action Plans after one year (indicator 2.2.2).

**Objective 2.3: Advance Excellence in Focused Research Areas**

The Office of Research and Strategic Partnerships works to support faculty and student research endeavors in all areas, and to guide university investment in high priority areas for the campus and region. PSU’s success in advancing the excellence in this area will be measured in several ways.

External funding for research projects fuels PSU’s efforts to continue building a successful research culture. Grant funds can not only be used to purchase specific items, instruments or materials, but also provide opportunities and funding for both undergraduate and graduate students to work in emerging areas of research. To gauge the success of PSU in the area of funded research, Total sponsored project expenditures each year (indicator 2.3.1), Number of faculty with externally funded projects each year (indicator 2.3.2), and the Number of Graduate Research Assistants (indicator 2.3.3) will be tracked.

**Core Theme 3: Extend our Leadership in Community Engagement**

When the PSU Board of Trustees adopted the new Strategic Plan in December 2015, it endorsed a new vision, calling for PSU to “Extend our leadership in community engagement.” Not only will this commitment to community engagement provide opportunities for our current students and faculty, it will also stimulate a life-long interest in engagement with PSU, our alumni, and the regional communities.

PSU is defined by its urban location and strives to fully integrate community engagement into its undergraduate and graduate curricula. This core theme is central to PSU’s approach to teaching, learning, and research. The new Strategic Plan expands on this commitment in order to extend its national leadership position in community engagement.

Initiatives from the Strategic Plan such as a Community Engagement Research Academy are intended “to analyze the practice and impact of engagement and inform the world about effective
community collaboration through research, data collection and academic writing”\textsuperscript{10} and act as a means to promote and support community engagement.

PSU will continue to be a leader in its community by looking for opportunities to collaborate and participate in projects such as the Portland Innovation Quadrant.\textsuperscript{11} This collaboration is a leading initiative in the city’s Economic Development Strategy, which is a five-year plan for promoting job creation and economic growth recently adopted by Portland’s City Council. By partnering with higher education institutions, workforce development providers, and private sector partners, PSU will be part of an active collaboration that will help develop, enhance, and guide decision making in an area of Portland that is “projected to grow by approximately 30,000 jobs in the next 25 years.”\textsuperscript{12}

Objectives

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<tr>
<th>Core Theme 3: Extend our Leadership in Community Engagement – Enhance engagement opportunities to further strengthen the reciprocal relationship between PSU and the broader Community</th>
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Objective 3.1: Make PSU’s Engagement More Visible and Accessible

PSU will make community engagement more visible and accessible by developing and launching an electronic community engagement portal. This portal will profile community engagement activities and will be used to track and assess the variety of partnerships occurring across the campus and in communities throughout the state and region. While this portal is not yet complete, when it is, it will be used to track the number of institutional/community strategic partnerships (indicator 3.1.1). This data as well as the portal will provide PSU clearer evidence and enhanced communication of its community engagement activities and impact.

Objective 3.2: Provide Opportunities for Students to Engage with the Community

\textsuperscript{10} \url{http://www.pdx.edu/strategic-plan-extend-our-leadership-in-community-engagement} Strategic Goal Objective 3, initiative 2.3
\textsuperscript{11} \url{http://www.pdxinnovation.com/iq.html}
\textsuperscript{12} \url{http://www.pdxinnovation.com/iq.html}
Community-based Learning (CBL) involves educating students in an academic discipline while also preparing them to be contributing citizens. By becoming involved in community activities, students benefit others while benefiting themselves, learning about teamwork, civic responsibility, and the application of intellectual skills to community issues. CBL options in regular classes engage students in performing service as a way to gather, test, and apply content and skills from existing courses. Students perform a designated amount of service, and their learning from that experience is evaluated as part of the course. PSU will track the number of CBL courses offered (indicator 3.2.1).

Internships offer valuable experiential learning beyond the classroom setting and are realized through long standing relationships with the regional community. It is a stated goal in PSU’s Strategic Plan to offer flexible internship opportunities for students who face challenges in balancing family, work and learning responsibilities, or for students who require accommodations. By tracking the number of students participating in internships (indicator 3.2.2), PSU can determine where improvements can be made.

Core Theme 4: Expand our Commitment to Equity

It is stated in the Strategic Plan that PSU shall “create an environment that is open, inclusive, and committed to diversity, and to ensure that all students and faculty embrace culturally responsive teaching and learning.” In developing PSU’s Strategic Plan, a unique Equity Lens approach was used to examine the plan and its initiatives to ensure that it is inclusive and culturally sensitive to the broad diversity of students, faculty and staff. The concept of equity and social justice are key tenants to this approach.

Using the Equity Lens approach guides PSU in the following ways.

• Deepen our commitment by looking for opportunities to make PSU policy, programs and practice more equitable.
• Elevate the campuses expectations for greater accountability around equity issues.
• Consider acknowledging equity efforts in promotion and tenure guidelines, performance evaluations and similar assessments.
• Acknowledge that “the international educational experience” can be local, by making valuable cross-cultural experiences available to our students through increased contact with international students and communities in our area.
• Recognize that cultural understanding is a pre-requisite for an engaged education and that we have a responsibility to provide our students with the necessary competencies to be able to work with diverse colleagues and the organizations they serve.

PSU’s Diversity Action Council (DAC) guides our work in the equity arena. The DAC is a president-appointed advisory committee comprised of PSU faculty, staff, and students that works closely

13 http://www.pdx.edu/strategic-plan-expand-our-commitment-to-equity
14 http://www.pdx.edu/strategic-plan-expand-our-commitment-to-equity
15 https://www.pdx.edu/diversity/diversity-action-council
with the Vice President for Global Diversity and Inclusion. DAC's role is to foster equity and social justice by guiding PSU programs, policies, and decision making so that the university works in conjunction with its diverse constituents.

As listed in Objective 1.4, providing resources to meet the needs of our diverse students is another way that PSU demonstrates its commitment to equity. Campus centers such as Disability Resource Center, La Casa Latina, Multicultural Center, Native American Student and Community Center, Queer Resource Center, Resource Center for Students with Children, Veterans Resource Center, and Women’s Resource Center provide places where students and faculty can seek assistance in safe and accepting environments.

**Objectives**

| Core Theme 4: Expand our Commitment to Equity - Create an environment at PSU that is open, inclusive and committed to diversity, and ensure that all students and faculty embrace culturally responsive teaching and learning. |
|---|---|
| Objective | Indicator |
| 4.1 Create a more inclusive campus | 4.1.1 Number of diversity/Inclusion trainings sponsored by Human Resources and the Office of Global Diversity and Inclusion |
| | 4.1.2 Percentage of Employee Participation in Diversity/Inclusion Training |
| 4.2 Promote diversity through hiring and retention | 4.2.1 Percentage of new employees who represent diverse populations |
| | 4.2.2 Number of employees retained who represent diverse populations |
| 4.3 Diversity learning outcomes | 4.3.1 Track results of pre and post tests which look directly at diversity and inclusion in General Education Courses |
| | 4.3.2 Number of General Education Courses whose pedagogy has been reviewed in the last year for diversity and inclusion |

**Objective 4.1: Create a More Inclusive Campus**

To create a more inclusive campus and improve cultural responsiveness, PSU offers training sessions. The trainings that are offered focus on a variety of topics such as: recruitment and retention of diverse employees and students and methods for assessing specific pedagogy to determine how course content and delivery can be changed to be more inclusive.
The first indicator for this objective is the number of trainings offered that focus on diversity and inclusion (indicator 4.1.1). The second indicator for this objective will be the percentage of faculty and staff participating in the trainings (indicator 4.1.2).

Training opportunities on the schedule for 2016-17 include: LGBTQ+ Inclusive Curriculum: Strategies for Implementation in Every Field, Creating an Inclusive Environment for Students of Color, Spotting and Addressing Microaggressions, Reconstructing Truth: The Impact of Centuries of Stereotypes about Disability, Diversity & Inclusion: A Catalyst for Developing a High Performance Organization and a Respectful and Inclusionary Workplace (Designed for Supervisors).

Past trainings include: More than Islamophobia Teach-In: Consequences of Xenophobia, Webinar: Authentic People with Real Disabilities: Learn How to Represent this Important Diversity, Intercultural Awareness and Creating Cultural Synergy in a Multicultural Classroom: Understanding Yourself and Your Students, Changing Demographics at PSU: Identifying and addressing factors that impede the success of students of color at PSU.

Objective 4.2: Promote Diversity Through Hiring and Retention

In order to evaluate efforts in the hiring and retention of diverse employees, PSU will examine both the total number of new faculty and staff hired and the number of people hired for these positions that represent diverse populations (indicator 4.2.1), and the Number of employees retained that represent diverse populations (indicator 4.2.2).

Retention is defined differently for the different employment classifications. Tenure track faculty will be considered as retained if they maintain continuous employment and are awarded tenure. Non-tenure Track Faculty will be considered as retained if they attain continuous appointment status. Staff members will be considered as retained if they are employed by PSU beyond one year.

The insights gained from these data points will permit PSU to continue to make important strides in creating a workforce that better reflects an increasingly diverse student body.

Objective 4.3: Diversity Learning Outcomes

PSU’s University Studies (general education) programs – including Freshman Inquiry, Sophomore Inquiry, Junior Cluster, and Senior Capstone courses – explicitly incorporate Diversity Learning Outcomes. A key feature of these courses is that students are taught how to communicate to diverse audiences. Through use of pre and post surveys, University Studies is able to assess student’s cultural awareness and sensitivity (indicator 4.3.1).

After students complete the University Studies program, they should be able to demonstrate their competency in the following ways.
creatively and comprehensively demonstrates an understanding of personal, institutional and ideological issues surrounding diversity in a scholarly fashion, using concrete examples

- work reflects an ability to view issues from multiple perspectives, to question what is being taught, and to construct independent meaning and interpretations
- demonstrates broad awareness of how the self appears from the greater perspective of human experience, questions own views in light of this awareness, and contemplates its implications for life choices in the personal and public spheres

The results from the survey will permit PSU to continually improve its approach to developing students and graduates who are culturally aware and socially inclusive.

The general education courses are periodically reviewed to make sure that the subject matter and method of teaching address issues of diversity and inclusion. PSU will track the number of these courses that are reviewed each year (indicator 4.3.2) and provide support to faculty members as they consider how to adjust course content and/or delivery methods.

**Core Theme 5: Innovate for Long-Term Stability- Foster Innovation and Continuous Improvement in All Areas of the University Including Identifying New Sources of Revenue to Advance the PSU Mission**

PSU is always seeking to identify ways to effectively manage its budget while providing an environment in which faculty and students can succeed. The President, the Office of Finance and Administration and the Office of Academic Affairs work closely with other campus leaders, faculty and staff to establish fiscal priorities and operate the University in financially sound manner.

In order to create long-term stability, the university is investing resources in the following areas:

- Development of a university level analysis of systems and processes identifying those that result in duplication, inefficiency, or excess cost.
- Prioritization of improvements to the systems and processes identified based on their potential impact and the resources required to implement them.
- Strategically implement improvements that have high priority over a period of time that institutional resources will allow.
- Create a heat map of critical systems that could be impacted by various natural disasters or other extraordinary circumstances identifying those with the most critical impact.
- Develop an Emergency Management Plan to ensure a rapid response providing for the safety of the campus community and restoration of critical services.
- The establishment a university reserve policy and a primary reserve ratio.
Objectives

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<th>Core Theme 5: Innovate for Long-term Sustainability -- Foster innovation and continuous improvement in all areas of the University, including identification of new sources of revenue to advance the PSU mission.</th>
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<td>5.1 Diversify revenue streams</td>
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<td>5.2 Eliminate or modernize practices or systems that are duplicative, inefficient or add unnecessary costs, taking into account costs generated by units and paying particular attention to costs incurred by students.</td>
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**Objective 5.1: Diversify Revenue Streams**

Because state funding has not kept pace with the costs of higher education, it has become more important to find other sources of revenue. By identifying new sources of revenue, whether through partnerships or new opportunities, PSU can continue to have the resources to support our long term stability while still serving the needs of students and faculty.

While tuition revenue and state allocations will remain significant portions of the University budget, diversifying the budget is important. Gifts, Grants, & Contracts as a percent of the University budget (*indicator 5.1.1*) will represent the extent to which PSU has been able to secure new and additional resources beyond tuition revenue and state allocations.

To manage the cyclical nature of higher education funding and make long term strategic investments, PSU will track the balance of reserve funds to meet or exceed the PSU Board of Trustees Reserve Ratio Policy (*indicator 5.1.2*). This reserve is necessary in order to be able to act quickly in case of any significant changes in state funding, student enrollment, or an unanticipated emergency.

**Objective 5.2: Eliminate or modernize practices or systems that are duplicative, inefficient or add unnecessary costs, taking into account costs generated by units and paying particular attention to costs incurred by students.**
There are numerous examples of projects that PSU has implemented to increase the efficiency of its services. A few years ago, a new system was put in place so that undergraduate students were enabled to declare their majors online. Previously, students had to submit a paper request to the registrar’s office but now they can do it online without having to come to campus, find parking, and wait in line. Last year, PSU started to use a single online graduate school application instead of two – one in the graduate school and one by individual schools. The ‘single app’ has streamlined the process, reduced overall costs and provided for uniformity across disciplines. Also in the last year, the Office of Research and Sponsored Projects began using an open source software called Kuali to track its finances. These electronic innovations streamline the administrative process, resulting in better data reporting and efficiencies within the processes for faculty and staff.

Each year, PSU will initiate and measure the impact of projects focused on rationalization and improvement of its services to students and faculty (indicator 5.2.1).

**Conclusion**

Since July 2014, PSU has been governed by its own Board of Trustees. The change has given PSU a broader degree of independence and ability to determine its own future. As part of this new direction, the board charged PSU President Wim Wiewel with drafting a new strategic plan to guide the University for the next five years and serve as a measuring stick for the Board. The strategic plan, developed over the course of 18 months, includes input from over a thousand PSU faculty, staff, students, alumni and community members. The five objectives in this Year One Report reflect PSU’s deep history as an urban serving institution and its future as laid out in the Strategic Plan.

The work on this *Year One Report* was started in September 2015, soon after the *Year Seven Report* was submitted in August 2015. Input for this document was solicited and provided by many people across the campus community and from up and down the organization chart. As a result of this work, the core themes listed here congruently fit in with the Strategic Plan and the indicators create a framework for tracking performance over time. Work will continue on the indicators and on the frequency and nature of data collection as well the acceptable threshold for achievement.
Glossary

**Academic Program Review** - Usually conducted through a form of self-study or external accreditation, the process for the ongoing review of existing programs engages faculty, administrators, graduates, and community partners in a thoughtful exploration that parallels many of the same elements reviewed during the program's initial approval. Results help reaffirm an institution's commitment to a program area, confirm the program's linkage with the institution's mission and strategic plan, and provide useful data for the institution's planning cycle.

**Articulation Agreements** - Written agreements between institutions that plainly spell out the academic pathways for students transferring from one institution to another.

**Community Based Learning** - Involves educating students in an academic discipline while also preparing them to be contributing citizens. By becoming involved in community activities, students benefit others while benefiting themselves, learning about teamwork, civic responsibility, and the application of intellectual skills to community issues. Community-based Learning options in regular classes engage students in performing service as a way to gather, test, and apply content and skills from existing courses. Students perform a designated amount of service, and their learning from that experience is evaluated as part of the course.

**Completion** - The point at which a degree is awarded.

**Diversity** - A term used to describe the many national, racial, ethnic groups and sovereign tribal Nations in the United States that have brought their cultures, languages and belief systems to North America. It is a term that has grown to include the representation of all those who hold both dominant and minoritized identities, and it aims to prioritize attention to the importance of diversification across society, including employment, research, policy making, political representation, and institutional governance composition.

**Experiential Learning** - The process of learning by doing or by “learning through reflection on doing.”

**Faculty and Staff Retention** - Defined differently based on the employee’s classification. Tenure track faculty are considered retained if they remain at PSU through the awarding of tenure. Non Tenure Track Faculty will be considered retained if they achieve continuous appointments. Staff members will be considered retained if they are employed beyond one year.

**Open Educational Resources** - Freely accessible, openly licensed documents and media that are useful for teaching, learning, and assessing as well as for research purposes.

**Student Achievement Measure (SAM)** - Tracks student movement across postsecondary institutions to provide a more complete picture of undergraduate student progress and completion within the higher education system. SAM is an alternative to the federal graduation rate, which is limited to tracking the completion of first-time, full-time students at one institution.

**University Studies** - PSU’s four-year general education program is required of all students, with the exception of those enrolled in Liberal Studies or the Honors Program. University Studies begins with Freshman Inquiry, a year-long course introducing students to different modes of inquiry and providing them with the tools to succeed in advanced studies and their majors. At the sophomore level, students
choose three different Sophomore Inquiry courses, each which leads into a thematically linked, interdisciplinary cluster of courses at the upper-division level. Finally, all students are required to complete a Capstone course which consists of teams of students from different majors working together to complete a project addressing a real problem in the Portland metropolitan community.

**Unmet Financial Need** - The difference between a student’s financial need and a student’s financial aid.
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reTHINK and Provost Challenge Update

Please visit [www.pdx.edu/oai/rethink-psu](http://www.pdx.edu/oai/rethink-psu) for more information.

U.S. public higher education faces increasing challenges, including changing models of educational delivery, declining state funding, alternative credentialing, demographic shifts in student populations, questions concerning the relevancy of the curriculum, increased cost, and increasing legislative scrutiny. Portland State University is not immune to these challenges.

reTHINK PSU, a presidential initiative at Portland State University, is a campus-wide effort to deliver an education that serves more students with better outcomes, while containing costs through curricular innovation, community engagement and effective use of technology. reTHINK PSU projects follow a well-designed reTHINK roadmap for developing solutions for challenges facing PSU.

The Academic Leadership Team (Provost, Deans and Vice Provosts) identified clusters of overlapping activities for current focus and implementation.
Many Students Are Young, In College and Homeless

by John Sepulvado (/contributor/john-sepulvado/) OPB | Dec. 13, 2015 1:05 p.m.

Josh Anderson was working at an East Portland fast-food restaurant when he decided he had enough.

“The manager there was really hard to get along with. My best wasn’t good enough,” Anderson says. So, the 20-year-old started thinking about quitting.

“I have enough money saved up to get through the end of the lease. And hopefully by then I can find another job,” said Anderson. He didn’t find a job, and three months later he was homeless.

At the time, he was a student at Portland Community College. Soon, instead of studying at the library, he spent his days looking for places to sleep. He dropped out of college.

“I guess I got discouraged, with my grades really hurting from that, and you know, I just thought, you know, there’s no [point],” Anderson says.

Across the country, stories like Anderson’s – where one decision or life event can lead to homelessness — are being reported.

College officials are finding more students who are living on the edge of a financial cliff, even in rural or suburban areas.
Cherliyn Nederhiser says her office is seeing many more students who are struggling to keep their housing. The Lead Public Safety Officer at Mount Hood Community College, Nederhiser says her officers are passing out more 211 cards that direct students to local social service agencies.

It unclear how many more, but Nederhiser describes the increase in housing insecure students as “very noticeable.”

“They’re on the edge,” Nederhiser says. “Maybe their financial aid isn’t coming through like they thought it was going to...they say the economy is improving...for a lot of folks that are marginalized, it’s not improving for them.”

Nederhiser says she normally finds the students because they’ve acted out in class, or are showing signs they’re sleeping in their car. Nederhiser’s colleagues have been widely praised around campus for taking a proactive approach to helping students before they lose their housing.

Yet, other than anecdote’s, it’s hard to gauge just how often this is happening, in part because homeless college students are hard to track.

Experts say homeless students are more likely to conceal their situation to friends and professors. They’re also more likely to drop out, move, or live in temporary housing or abandoned dwellings where it’s hard to account for them.

According to the U.S. Department of Education, some 60,000 college students under 21 have across the country have identified themselves as homeless.

That number is compiled from data collected from FAFSA forms. Students who are homeless and under 21 don’t have to report their parent’s income when applying for aid.

Because some students may qualify for larger financial aid packages if their parent’s income isn’t taken into account, many colleges require students to provide proof that they are indeed homeless.

At one time, college student Cameron Whitten was homeless. He says when he transferred to Portland State University, the financial aid office required him to gather documentation proving he was homeless.
“I remember having that letter and having to turn it into the financial aid desk, and the looks you would get,” Whitten says. “You know, some people looked at me like, ‘Oh yeah, is this person gaming the system?’ So that was definitely stressful and traumatizing for me.”

While the federal government does not require financial aid officers to check homeless status (https://ifap.ed.gov/fsahandbook/attachments/1415AVG.pdf), some financial aid officers say they worry that some students are indeed trying to “game the system.”

“You know, I hear people say that, and I have to stop and look them in the eye, and say, have you ever slept on a park bench, have you ever slept on a roof top?” says Sandy McBrayer, CEO of the nonprofit Children’s Initiative.

McBrayer founded a successful school for homeless students, and received the National Teacher of the Year award. She says the burden put on students to prove they are homeless does greater harm than the occasional student who may check a box to try and get a better aid package.

“I don’t know what you would use to prove you live in a car,” McBrayer says. “Or an abandoned building. I don’t even know how someone could require you to prove it because no one is going to punch your ticket when you’re sleeping by yourself in an abandoned building.”