

Leaders Interviewed:

James Bean, Dean, Lundquist College of Business
Dave Frohnmayer, President
Ernie Kent, Head Coach, Men's Basketball
Rich Linton, Vice President for Research and Dean of the Graduate School
John Moseley, Executive Vice President and Provost

Is there a vision and strategy for the institution? For the operating units?

The University of Oregon does not have an institution-wide strategic vision or strategy per-se. The University uses a very strong identity to drive most decision making. The identity of the University of Oregon is focused around several principles and facts:

- The University is a member of the Association of American Universities (AAU). The AAU was founded in 1900 and currently consists of sixty American universities and two Canadian universities. The AAU focuses on issues important to research intensive universities, such as funding for research, research policy issues, and graduate and undergraduate education.
- We are a liberal arts institution.
- We are a public University.
- We are located in Oregon.
- We have a long history of collaboration throughout the institution. For example, our oldest interdisciplinary Institute recently celebrated its 50 year anniversary.
- We have active and vibrant representation of faculty issues through our faculty senate.
- We are a very decentralized institution.
- We value sustainability.

This identity drives many initiatives and localized strategic plans. For example, our Lundquist College of Business has recently gone through a planning process that focused on the U of O identity. This planning process resulted in development of four centers in the College of Business that are all based on the "Oregon identity".

What are the implications of the vision/strategy (or lack thereof) for existing operations and decision making? Do people see it differently?

- There isn't a specific vision or strategy, so there is no comprehensive set of projects or goals
- The challenge is to translate this identity into action plans. This is difficult in a decentralized institution, as action plans tend to be local efforts that are at times not coordinated well across units.
- This environment creates differential levels of access, support, localized solutions, haves & have-nots.

What are seen as the most important priorities?

The core priority at the University revolves around financial stability. As the State of Oregon has worked through an economic downturn, there has been a significant reduction in the overall funding of higher education. Leadership reaction to this latest round of financial crisis is guided significantly by their experience with a previous crisis in the early 1990s that was caused by a state property tax limitation. In that crisis, the University performed very public cuts that damaged the reputation of the University. Our enrollment plummeted by almost 20%. The current crisis is being handled much differently. We are protecting our reputation by projecting an image of stability. We have a renewed focus on internationalization and entrepreneurial efforts. The goal of stability is expressed in various ways; for example, the VP for Research summarized his core priority as "sustainability of the research enterprise."

A second priority is to project an image of stability as we go through a process of replacing most of the senior leadership at the University. The executive management team has done careful succession planning through several years of retirements of the leadership.

A final priority that is beginning to echo throughout the institution is in responding and adapting to changes in the student population. As we did our interviews, the best articulation of this came from our head basketball coach. He talked a lot about how students have changed and how he has changed his approach to coaching and mentoring due to this change. He also talked about the role of technology in reaching many of the students and how it is playing a more and more important role in how information is presented and learned.

Is there a process for changing the vision and strategy as the environment changes?

- As mentioned above, we respond to the environment primarily on the basis of our identity rather than on an articulated vision or strategic plan. Since established identity changes slowly, this strategy fosters a stable image, and also reflects the UO's long tradition and policy of incremental growth.
- We are also driven largely by external economic factors. Due to the state's fiscal structure, we did not reap significant direct **benefits** from the tech/econ boom of 1990s, but still bore **costs** when the bubble burst. This required adjusting our funding model, mainly through increased tuition and fees. We have also adjusted to the impact of 9/11 and the resulting decline in international student enrollments.
- The last example of sweeping change in the University landscape was a DOE/NSF funding for Science Complex in mid-80s (\$45-50M).

Is there a relationship between vision/goals and actual budget strategy for implementing the vision/goals? What are the major risks facing the institution?

- Protect the University's AAU status and campus reputation
- Maintain & increase private giving
- The core risk facing the University remains financial stability
- The University President, Dave Frohnmayer, talked a lot about the difficulty of developing communications that truly reach the entire community. He identified this as one of his key challenges.
- The President uses a list of "things that keep me awake at night" to articulate his core concerns:
 1. How can we continue to provide our students and the State of Oregon quality education, research, and services that are comparable to our peer universities when they have, on average, 50% more revenue per student?
 2. How can we continue to attract and retain quality faculty?
 3. How can we provide graduate programs to meet the state's needs?
 4. How can we maintain the size and quality of our research programs?
 5. How can we continue to attract non-resident, including international, students if we cannot maintain the quality of our academic programs?
 6. With increasing tuition, how can UO maintain the economic diversity of our student body?
 7. How can we protect the state's investment in campus facilities, let alone construct new ones we need, given the lack of state support?
 8. How can we convince private donors to invest in the University while the state is withdrawing its investment?

How does the campus respond to information resource, service, and technology needs?

- Lack of strategic vision hurts here. It is hard to translate an identity into action plans.
- The campus as a whole doesn't respond, usually just individual units, and sometimes in an uncoordinated fashion.
- Responses are ad hoc
- Developments are opportunistic
- Updating and maintaining university classrooms is a good example of where this all goes wrong. Although classrooms are a core service, they are a large (enterprise-level) component, no one group sees classrooms as their priority. Over the years, we have not taken advantage of

opportunities to incrementally rebuild and renovate them in a methodical fashion. This is now starting to happen as a collaboration among various groups, however, are decidedly behind our peers in this area. A similar concern (shared by the VP for Research) is the absence of a central backup and archiving facility for research datasets.

- The business of the University (as relates to technology, & technology vision) is largely done by people at mid-level, like us. While that means we are nimble and can take on new and innovative projects, the overall approach is ad-hoc and it is difficult at times to get executive-level attention, understanding, buy-in, and visibility.