

EOU trustees learn about new degree program

Board re-elects Chair David Nelson to another two-year term

East Oregonian

LA GRANDE — During its first regular meeting of the academic year on Thursday, the Eastern Oregon University Board of Trustees heard from faculty members who presented a new degree program that could bolster enrollment.

With final approval expected this spring, the Sustainable Rural Systems students will learn about issues ranging from public health to public works, and from arts and culture to agriculture.

“They’ll get to know rural systems very intimately,” said EOU Dean Peter Geissinger. “That means everything that makes our communities livable.”

Students will work on multi-year, interdisciplinary projects that affect local communities and model real-world problem-solving. Cohort groups will progressively take on more responsibility as they move up the ranks, and mentor one another.

Two concentrations — environmental resources and economics of rural systems — will set students on a path to obtain a bachelor of science, bachelor of arts, or bachelor of applied science degree through the program. Collaborating across all of EOU’s academic colleges, the program plans to hire two new faculty members before taking on a restoration project in partnership with



The Eastern Oregon University Board of Trustees toured the Nightingale Gallery and ceramics studios on Thursday during the board’s first regular meeting of the academic year in La Grande.

Baker Technical Institute.

Trustees praised the program’s focus on experiential learning and its cross-disciplinary approach.

“This is how our graduates work in the real world,” Trustee Jer Pratton said. “I couldn’t be more excited about this program, and its potential to make an immediate impact for students and communities.”

The Sustainable Rural Systems degree was approved by trustees, and will go on to the Higher Education Coordinating Committee and accrediting bodies this spring, with the aim of enrolling students in fall 2020.

During the meeting the trustees also discussed the institution’s fall enrollment report.

Holly Chason, who oversees enrollment management at EOU, said that even while the number of students went up, the number of credit hours had decreased. She said the data suggests students are taking fewer classes this term than last fall. She also said the 7% increase in online students and growth in high school students doing accel-

erated learning have contributed to the decrease in student credit hours.

This fall, EOU enrolled 11.5% more new online transfer undergraduates than last fall. Trustees discussed additional opportunities to partner with community colleges — like Blue Mountain Community College or Treasure Valley Community College — and engage students at regional centers across the state.

Trustees explored retention and completion rates because of their link to the cost of higher education and state funding support. Vice Chair Bobbie Conner highlighted the importance of collecting exit data, so board members understand why students leave EOU.

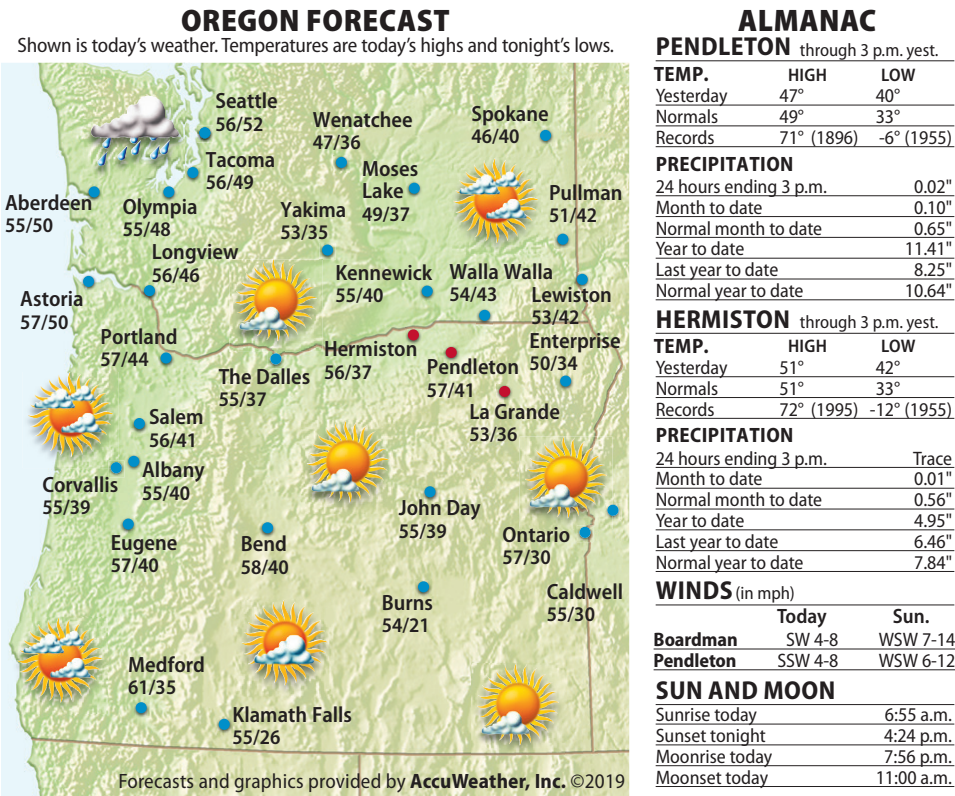
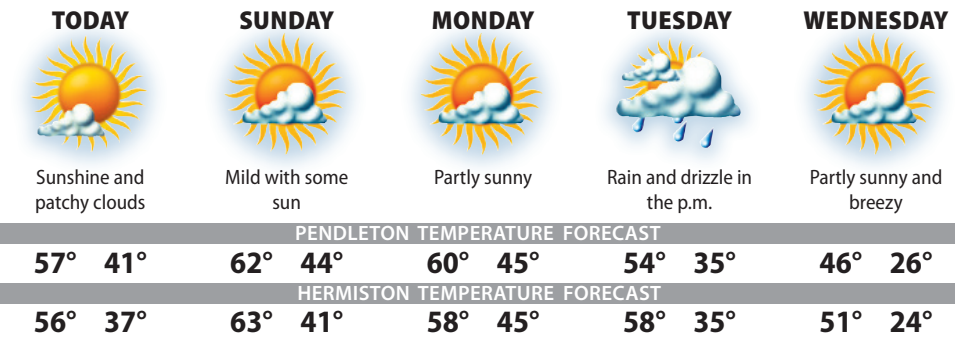
“I’m concerned about students stopping or dropping out because of rising tuition costs,” she said. “We need data so we can make informed decisions about that kind of thing.”

Also looking ahead, trustees approved an updated operating budget for the current fiscal year. The preliminary budget they signed off on last spring was adjusted after the Oregon State Legislature finalized its allocations for the biennium.

“I’m really impressed with the overall financial health of the institution,” Pratton said. “The stability and accountability this administration has built are what make this budget work.”

Trustees also re-elected Chair David Nelson to another two-year term, and elected Trustee Abel Mendoza to serve a one-year term as vice chair.

Forecast for Pendleton Area



NATIONAL EXTREMES

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)

High 87° in Marathon, Fla. Low 2° in Yellowstone N.P., Wyo.

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY

