

**President's Report to the Board of Education**

**April 14, 2021**

**Submitted by Debra H. Thatcher**

---

---

1. **Legislative Session.** Conducting legislative work remotely has slowed processes and bills are not moving as quickly as expected. The top priority remains the biennial funding of all of Oregon's community colleges at \$702M to maintain current service level, upskill/reskill workforce displaced by the impact of the pandemic, support marginalized and economically challenged students, keep college affordable, and provide long term support beyond the one-time federal stimulus dollars. A few of the other bills being watched that directly affect higher education include: clearly communicating mandatory fees for students, requiring equitable placement of students with GEDs and students with high school diplomas, making Board meetings accessible through technological means, and establishing common course numbering for lower division courses.
2. **Enrollment.** Each week we compare current enrollment to enrollment at the same point in the term for the previous academic year. That means we are now comparing enrollment with spring term 2020, the first term impacted by the pandemic. Relative to last year, overall FTE is up 4.2%, reimbursable FTE is up 3.5%, and registered credit hours are up 2.2%. These numbers are even higher than last week's numbers, largely due to increases in apprenticeship, workforce development, and high school dual enrollment.
3. **COVID transition.** Discussions continue regarding how operations will adjust for Fall term; a tentative plan is under development should COVID restrictions be modified in the next few months. The plan is to have over 50% of courses delivered in a hybrid manner – a blend of f2f and remote learning. Our major interest now is for employees and students to be vaccinated.
4. **Academic programs.** As I have shared with you for the past two years, we are continually evaluating academic programs for enrollment, relevance, value, and sustainability. The work is done with individual programs and departments, who include relevant advisory committees and other community partners as part of the review process. It is crucial that these discussions be held in house with these entities so that a plan for moving forward is developed, rather than simply sowing doubt in the minds of students and community members about the availability of a program. We come to the Board when we have worked through issues and have made a plan for improvement or deletion. Those plans come to the Board either as information items, such as when we shared that year 2 of the Fire Science program moved to online delivery to improve enrollment and better meet the needs of students, or as action items, such as when we determined that the auto associate degrees needed to be replaced with a one-year certificate program. When we come to the Board, we fully expect you to question us to be sure we have solid data, considered impact on students and the community, explored alternatives, and developed a solid business plan.

In the case of music and theatre, for two years we have been looking at enrollment concerns. Several possible solutions were in the works, but before we could fully develop a plan, a message was sent to the community with incorrect and incomplete information. There is no undoing what happened; instead, we looked at the community reaction to the message and talked with faculty to determine next steps. I am saddened that so many community members got the impression that we were simply

going to eliminate music and theatre. I am disheartened that the story got twisted and some people claimed that the Board of Education actually approved such an untenable action.

Though it is premature to share plans, I will share the basics of our concern with music and theatre and a brief description of how we are moving forward to find a solution.

First, theatre: We are not using the major impact of COVID as a reason to look at theatre. In the two academic years of 2016-17 and 2017-18, only four of 28 courses had double digit enrollment and of those 4, only one had over 20 students. That means 86% of our theatre courses did not meet minimum enrollment requirements. Those two years were followed by a year of very little theatre offerings due to the loss of our FT faculty, and then the hiring in Fall 2019 of a new faculty member who experienced COVID in her first year of work. At this time, we need to determine what theatre courses interest students who want to pursue theatre and what courses would be attractive for general education, what courses will transfer, how to partner with the community, and how to balance faculty workload expectations for teaching and directing.

Next, music. General education music classes consistently fill well, with enrollment typically between 20 and 39 students. Think "History of Rock and Roll" and similar courses that students take to fulfill humanities requirements of their associate degree. Prior to COVID, first year courses designed for music majors generally had enrollment in the teens, though some of those numbers were decreasing in 2018-2019, the year before COVID hit. Additionally, two courses for choral music ensembles were healthily enrolled with UCC students. In spite of these data, there are four main concerns for music:

1. Second year courses consistently do not meet minimum enrollment requirements and range from 3 to 9 students in each course.
2. Students do not actually enroll in the music major even though they may take required courses for music majors. That leads to program evaluation challenges.
3. We try to be everything to everybody and offer more music courses than we can reasonably support.
4. We have multiple ensembles that have zero to three UCC students in them even though the ensembles themselves have 18 to 100 non-enrolled, non-paying community members. UCC pays the directors of the ensembles (both FT and PT faculty), procures music rights, provides rehearsal facilities, advertises events, etc. A little history is important – something I just learned. In the 1970s, community ensembles were invited to become course offerings at UCC because we could get FTE credit from the state. The thinking was that ensemble members didn't pay anything because funds were recouped through FTEs. That arrangement worked great for years, but the rules changed in 2006 when those courses became ineligible for reimbursement. We do not get FTE for the ensembles, and the only revenue supporting these ensembles is the tuition revenue of 1-3 students per ensemble, and sometimes no students are even in the ensemble. By Board policy, participation in a course requires enrollment for credit or for audit. Alternatively, a community education class can be created that requires enrollment and tuition. Current participation by community members is both a violation of policy and an issue of equity. What other community activities do we support at our expense? Why is it fair for some people to pay and others not? Why are we giving away our limited resources for educational activities that do not generate tuition revenue? We must answer these questions.

We cannot continue to operate as we do now and expect our programs to survive, but we do not think that the challenges faced by theatre and music are insurmountable. Why? The creativity of our faculty, leadership, and community members will undoubtedly find solutions. We are fortunate to have a provost with a strong educational and professional background in the performing arts. We have very smart and talented faculty. And we have talented and passionate community members.

Two task forces are being created, one for music and one for theatre, which will include faculty, students, and community members. The task forces will be given explicit directions by the provost to develop business plans to ensure the viability and sustainability of music and theatre. The faculty want to complete the plans by the end of spring term, implement them this fall, and re-evaluate the plans in December. We will indeed offer music and theatre in the 2021-2022 year to the extent that the pandemic limitations allow us to do so.

I want to reiterate three main points to the Board and to everyone listening to this meeting:

1. UCC never planned to eliminate music or theatre. We fully understand the value of the arts to the education of our students and to the vitality of the community.
2. The UCC Board never received any information or took any action on music or theatre programs. No one should be attributing such actions to the Board. All Board actions are public and recorded in minutes available on our website.
3. UCC is committed to working with community members to develop plans for sustainability of music and theatre. I have no doubt that we will have changes in what we offer and how we conduct the business of music and theatre education.

To be honest, my main concern is not our ability to find a way to support music and theatre. We will be able to do that. My biggest concern is that community members will persist in believing that the college tried to eliminate these programs, and that their belief in and trust of the college has eroded. My concern is that this untruth overshadows the great work that our campus has collectively done in the past four years.

We have moved the dial in so many ways. So I'll close by reminding people of that. UCC is committed to student success, is continually improving its services, is developing new academic programs, has received recognition for excellence for various reasons, has many valuable relationships with community partners, provides outstanding educational value, and has students who are doing amazing things. Think of those things when you think of Umpqua Community College.