



Ed Ray Oral History Interviews, August 28, 2015

Title

“The Best is Yet to Come”

Date

August 28, 2015

Location

Kerr Administration Building, Oregon State University.

Summary

In interview 4, Ray provides insight into the development of OSU's two branch campuses during his presidency. Ray discusses the means by which a vision was crafted for both OSU-Cascades in Bend and the Marine Studies Initiative in Newport, and shares his thoughts on the paths that both efforts have traveled in recent time.

The session then moves on to an examination of several disparate topics that have been hallmarks of Ray's years in office. In this, he describes the university's efforts to further internationalize its student body, and the partnership with INTO that has helped to propel this ambition. He likewise reflects on the work of OSU Statewide and the continuing vibrancy of the land grant mission at OSU. He then discusses the contributions that Sabah Randhawa has made to the university during his tenure as Provost, and shares his memories of the creation and organization of the OSU Board of Trustees.

As it nears its end, the interview shifts focus to the personal side of being a university president, with Ray providing a glimpse into his very busy schedule and reflecting on the sources of renewal that help him to manage the stress and fatigue of his job. The session concludes with Ray's thoughts on what the future of OSU might look like and the strong emphasis that he will be placing on the narrowing of achievement gaps within the student body.

Interviewee

Ed Ray

Interviewer

Chris Petersen

Website

<http://scarc.library.oregonstate.edu/oh150/ray/>

Transcript

Chris Petersen: Okay, today is August 28th, 2015, we are in the Kerr Admin Building for our fourth and concluding interview with President Ed Ray, and we have a diversity of topics to try to get to today. And the first thing I'd like to ask you about are the branch campuses. We've talked a lot about the Corvallis campus, and that was certainly the point of emphasis during the capital campaign, in terms of the news that came out of OSU, but with the end of the capital campaign a lot of what we've heard about has been the branch campuses, and I'd be interested in getting some of your perspective on how things have evolved in Bend and in Newport.

Ed Ray: Well Cascades, it reminds me of the old saying about somebody who's an overnight star who's been acting for twenty years. It didn't happen after the campaign. I think sometimes your focus shifts and the preponderance of attention goes from one place to the other, but literally since I came here we had already, I think in 2000, 2001, been asked, in a very odd competition - apparently OUS was incapable of deciding who should be the lead institution for the Cascades campus, so they invited the University of Oregon and OSU to submit proposals. And I don't know the details, but basically OSU was asked to take the lead role. But it was done, again, in a pretty dysfunctional way, because Eastern Oregon University had some courses there; I think that OIT may have, but I know that U of O did. And OUS was incapable of just saying "it's an OSU campus." So, they told OSU "you're in charge, but all these other programs have to be kept there."

And before it was awarded to OSU, it was kind of a cafeteria-style operation where all seven of the schools could offer courses there and sequences. The problem was that they would make individual decisions about whether they could sustain something or not. So, you might be majoring in education at Eastern and then it decides it isn't going to teach courses there anymore. Well, too bad. And it just made no sense. So, it was kind of floundering and not going anywhere, even though OSU was supposed to be in charge, because we really didn't have control. And in fact, at the undergraduate level all of the general studies courses, math and sciences, were taught by U of O-affiliated faculty. And so, we had no control over that part of the curriculum, and quite frankly we had leadership that seemed to be content to get along the go-along, not really be assertive in any way. And maybe I could have been more forceful. It took me a while to get up to speed and figure out what was going on and not going on. So, we had a couple of leaders there who were, you know, they did the best they could but we really weren't getting anywhere.

Then I found out—so this would have been about 2008 or '09, I sort of got frustrated with the fact we're not really progressing there at all and I asked to see the files of how did this all get started? How did we do the search in the first place for leadership there? And one of the interesting things I discovered was that Becky Johnson had been a candidate for the position there, and I think one of two finalists, who had not been selected to the position. And my immediate reaction was that she would be wonderful. So, I think it probably was about a six month period, because Becky and Lesley had just bought a house here in Corvallis near the golf course. I, probably more than Sabah, but Sabah and I sort of worked on her for the next six months to go over there and see how she liked it. But it was pretty clear to me that if we had someone like Becky in the leadership position there, we really could start moving things forward. And that proved to be the case. She's just terrific, and that's why she is probably, certainly, if not the principal, one of the principal reasons why we're as far along in creating a four-year university there as any other factor. And we worked pretty hard to convince her to go over there and take that one.

Now, when I was at Ohio State, one of the things I had to do as provost was take responsibility for the regional campuses as well as the main campus. To give you a sense of the magnitude, I think they have about fifty-four thousand students at the main campus in Columbus. They have four other campuses, Newark and Lima and Mansfield, and I don't remember where the fourth one is. But the point was, they were on the order of two to four thousand students. So, there was Columbus and then there was not exactly. And for many years, the attitude was that—and they even developed a means by which students who could apply to Ohio State after 1992, when they went to selective admissions instead of open enrollment, that they might be deflected to one of the other four if they were insisting on going to Ohio State.

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Well, that stayed that way. It was kind of not exactly and they figured out how they could cobble together some majors in psychology and English and whatever, helter skelter, and so I had the—I talked to the directors of those regional

campuses and I said "you know, this is going nowhere if you don't become a destination of choice. People have to go to you not because you're not exactly, but because you have programs and initiatives that really set you apart." So, that was sort of in process when I left there. So, when I came here and I knew about the Cascades campus, learned about it in Bend, we had to get control of the situation. U of O, under Richard Lariviere, agreed they really had no interest in undergraduate education there, so they pulled out, and that really allowed us to get control of the curriculum.

It was about that time we were able to get Becky in place there in a leadership position. And she and I had a conversation about, you need to figure out what are the majors that central Oregon needs that need to be your domain and not available in Corvallis. So, if somebody wants to study outdoor recreation or energy and energy engineering management, they're going to go to OSU-Cascades, because that's where those programs are offered. Recreation outdoor leadership, they want to go to OSU-Cascades. And she's really done a very good job connecting with the community, talking to business people, talking to students about areas that they want to study in. So, they have started to develop their own persona. It was literally in the '13 session that we finally got some support for a campus there. The state has been tremendous at providing resources for us.

Prior to that, I mean I literally had a meeting with the chancellor of OUS and chair, vice chair of the OUS board in Bend in the morning before I was to give a luncheon talk at the Chamber of Commerce, I think. And I guess there'd been this on again, off again, you know, is the community behind a four-year campus? Does it not want a four-year campus? So, George Pernsteiner asked Becky "can you raise a million dollars in six months to show people are willing to put in money?" Well, they far exceeded that. They raised the money for that. They're not where they ultimately need to be for sustainable fundraising, but they certainly met that challenge in the next six months. But at the lunch that I went to, that's when I basically, I was irritated at being asked why we want to do this, and I challenged people at this lunch to get off their hands, that this is not a spectator sport. If you want a four-year university here, you better fight like hell to get it, and you need to step up and figure out how you're going to make it happen.

And so, I floated the idea that I really thought—this would have been 2009 or '10 when that conversation occurred—that I really believed that by 2025 we could have a four-year campus there with three to five thousand students. And that's kind of been the recurring theme. We got support from the legislature, some support from donors, we now have 10.44 acres there, we have an option on some land that was a pumice mine that actually is a pretty nice site. I mean, if you heard from the people who were opposed to the campus being there, you'd think it was a dark, bottomless pit because of this pumice mine. It's a terraced landscape that you could do some really wonderful things with. Maybe we'll buy it, maybe we won't. We're also now talking to the county about, I think it's like seventy-six acres of landfill that's an ecological mess, and whether or not we can do mitigation work with maybe city, county, state, federal help to reclaim that site and actually turn an eyesore in the middle of Bend into a four-year campus university.

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So, there's a lot to be worked out going forward. I don't know how much you know about land use laws in Oregon, but they are mind-boggling. So, a few discontented residents are able to literally drag you through what now is going to be a two-year process where they object to the city council; the city council approved our plans for the ten and a half acres, not quite ten and a half, to build an academic building, a building that is a dining hall/academic building and a residence hall. And the residence hall, I think, is in conjunction with INTO, which is our international programs partner. So, they approved that, then this group appealed to the state to LUBA, the Land Use Board, and the Land Use Board unanimously supported us, so then of course they appealed to the state Court of Appeals, it's now at the state Court of Appeals, we'll hear from them hopefully not too long from now. In fact, I think they had the hearings a couple of days ago, and people thought that went reasonably well. And then if they lose there then they can go to the state Supreme Court.

So, now we're in this interesting situation, as if building a campus wouldn't be interesting and challenging enough, about what do we do when—because people in the community are very excited about having this four-year campus and they have reason to wonder if we're ever going to do it; at least they have reason historically to wonder if we were going to do anything, and we are. So, what we decided is to—we knew that at this point, once we heard from LUBA, we felt our chances of prevailing going forward are quite good, that instead of doing everything and putting many millions of dollars at risk if we get some kind of bizarre ruling from the state Court of Appeals or the Supreme Court, that we could—we couldn't get everything done because of the delay and having to go through LUBA. There's no way we could have everything ready for fall of '16, but if we just did the academic building, it could open in fall of '16 and then we could

continue construction, because we think we'll know at the latest by March, April or May of '16 if we've prevailed all the way through the Supreme Court and can go full bore.

We know that if we go forward with the other two facilities that they'll be ready for fall of '17. So, to minimize the amount of state dollars and private donations that we're putting at risk while we go through this legal business, we decided to go forward with the academic building. So, our plan is to open that in fall of '16; the dining hall, academic and residence hall buildings in fall of '17. And now it's getting attention partly because of the legal issues that are going on over there, people objecting to us building a campus, and also maybe it was crowded out a bit by the overall campaign and things that were going on. But this is a fifteen year process we're in, and it has been very purposeful for at least five or six years since Becky took over the leadership position here. So again, it's reminds me of this notion of an overnight success that's been trying to make it big for twenty years.

CP: And in Newport?

ER: Newport is a different and newer, it really is a newer proposition. One of the things that I was interested in when it was clear that we had prevailed in the western NOAA fleet moving to Newport, one of the questions that was asked at the groundbreaking before the new dock was built and the NOAA ships arrived—so, this would have been several years ago—it was really Senator Wyden said, "you know, this is great and it's wonderful to celebrate, but we need to be thinking about, what's the next big thing? I mean, this in and of itself is wonderful and it's kind of a beginning to revitalizing the coastal areas, but so what do we do next? I mean, are we done? This isn't going to quite stimulate the whole economy on the coast. What are we going to do?"

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So we have, as you know, one of the most outstanding programs, and now it's Earth, Ocean and Atmospheric Sciences, a long history, distinguished scholars; former president John Byrne was the director of NOAA, Jane Lubchenco, director of NOAA, Rick Spinrad, who was back here, who got his PhD in oceanography, is now back at NOAA as the chief scientist. The pedigree is long and distinguished, so it's clear we have tremendous capabilities. And the question was, how do we tie that to the coast? And for years I've been hearing people at the coast saying "we don't have good internet connections, people have to travel back and forth, we're kind of isolated here," a sense of frustration about, couldn't we do more?

So, I talked to Mark Abbott and others, and I forget where I was going, but I was literally going somewhere to give a talk and I decided I was going to announce that we're going to create a marine studies campus in Newport, but I had no idea what that meant. The three thousand to five thousand in Bend I invented. I made it up because most of the other smaller regional universities are three to five thousand students, so I figured it's a pretty safe range. Plus it was ten or fifteen years off. What are the odds they're going to track me down and say "you were wrong, it was only two thousand, five hundred?"

So, for Newport I was much more insecure about what was doable. So, I didn't know - is it five hundred, is it a thousand? So I call, I literally, while someone was driving me to I don't know where, a meeting, I called Mark Abbott and I said "you know, I've talked to people about how they would feel about us having a presence there in terms of a campus," I said, "but what would be a good number to use if I were going to say we're going to have something by 2025 - would it be five hundred students? Would it be a thousand students?" And he said "yeah, five hundred, good idea." So, that's how we got to the announcement that we were going to have a campus with at least five hundred students in residence by 2025.

But any of these things, you don't know, and nobody cares, if it's by 2025 or 2028, the point is you put a stake in the ground, you're going to do it. You're going to make something wonderful happen. And maybe it will be five hundred, maybe it will be seven hundred, maybe it'll be four hundred and thirty-two. That's not the point. The point is you put a stake in the ground - you're going to create a marine studies campus here. And then Rick Spinrad—so that was my superficial contribution to all this, sort of the vision that we could create a campus there. And then the real experts got to work. You know, the Bob Cowen and Jack Barth and Mark Abbott and Rick Spinrad and colleagues, and now there is a much deeper, broader sense of what's possible.

So, now people talk about by 2025 we're going to have maybe five hundred students on the coast at any one time, getting hands-on experiential learning opportunities. We're going to have another seven hundred and fifty students who are working in marine sciences here on the Corvallis campus and we're going to have a new undergraduate program in marine

sciences that we don't have at this point, to really provide sort of the foundation for all of that work. I had had some very superficial, but let's say preliminary, discussions with people about—and this had come out of a conversation with Chris Johns. I don't know if you know of Chris Johns, but he's the publisher of *National Geographic*. He's one of our graduates, and Rick Spinrad and I were talking to him one night about, you know, this sort of anti-science attitude that we see too much of in the country around climate change and so many other issues.

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And he told the story about—and I'll give you the short version of this—that they decided to do an issue on climate change, and the initial fear was half the people are going to hate it, half are going to love it, whatever you come up with, and you're going to lose half your audience, and you're trying to sell magazines. That's never a good strategy. Well, anyway, it turned out to be their best-selling issue ever, and he attributed that to the fact that they decided, you know what, we just need to tell stories. We don't need the scientists giving us the mumbo jumbo. We need people who are really good writers who can—who get science, who can then meet people where they live and create narratives about how the fishing industry off the east coast, or how the oyster beds in the northwest, how these things have been impacted by climate change and how that's affected people's lives, people who've been there for generations.

And so his point to us, which is very compelling to me, is we need people to talk to other people, to bring science to life for people who will never understand the mumbo jumbo but can be reached through compelling stories about what's happening in the lives of others that we have to take seriously. So, that led me to think about, if we're going to do something in marine studies, it's not just the science, marine sciences, it ought to be something where a creative writer in the College of Liberal Arts could go over there and have maybe a one quarter experience, take nothing but marine sciences courses, work on research vessels, do digs and so forth and just have this wealth of experience and knowledge that they could bring their narrative skills to.

And that would be true of people in any part of the university. Why would it not be a positive experience, regardless of what your major is, to have such an extraordinary experience, given the quality of everything that's there; not just our presence, but we've got NOAA and we've got other federal agencies - the Forest Service, EPA - you can work with some of the best people in the world on environmental, natural resource, oceanographic, atmospheric issues. How can that be a bad opportunity for anyone? I don't care what your major is. You want to go into political science? Well maybe you go into ocean policy. You want to go to law school? Well maybe you study the law of the sea and you become a litigant in all these issues about who owns the Arctic and why. I mean, these are all very compelling issues.

And so, that was my broader perspective, and it really came out of that conversation with Chris Johns, and colleagues really fleshed that out and now I think almost every colleague sees a role for itself in the marine sciences initiative, and all of them are really quite enthusiastic about the marine studies campus. It was interesting. As you would hope, we started having conversations last summer, if not before, I think actually before, about - so the campaign is reaching its end date, life goes on, what do we do next? What are the things we're working on? And we had deans and others do presentations and it was really interesting that virtually everyone had ideas and things that we could pursue, and many of them we will pursue, but virtually all of them said "we're really excited about this marine studies thing we're hearing about. We can see how our students and colleagues could benefit in that."

So, it really has been, there really has been a kind of groundswell of interest and support for making the marine studies campus come to life. It really was about two years ago that the proposal itself for what we would do there, this first phase of building this fifty million dollar, hundred thousand square foot academic building, that that came up. Fortunately we were able to go to an anonymous donor that was willing to pledge twenty million toward a sixty-five million dollar project.

So, the challenge—and we had three years to do it, I think starting—so I think we're one year into it. The challenge was that we had to raise forty-five million dollars. Five million for the facility and then we could use a state match for that to build the building, where we have about two of the five million for the building. We've gotten the pledge of the twenty-five million in state bonds to go with the twenty-five once we finish the private side of the twenty-five. So, we've got the building, and then there would be fifteen million in private funds for program purposes: support for students, faculty, facilities, equipment, whatever.

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And so, I think we're now—I saw something the other day—I think we're, of the forty that we have to raise, we're at something like thirty-three million dollars. So, we're going to get there. I mean, there's absolutely no question. We have two years to get there. I think by the end of this next year, the second of three years, I think we're going to have the building money and probably the program money, because the programs are so strong anyway. So, foundations and individuals and others give to these programs all the time. And I think this marine sciences initiative idea has really captured a lot of people's imagination. So, I'm very excited about that.

CP: Well, you mentioned INTO in talking about the Bend campus and I'm interested in exploring that a little bit more; the push to internationalize the university ever further, and the partnership with INTO.

ER: Well, if you look at—if you look at our international enrollment, when I first got here it was pretty low and we had talked through the strategic plan, what did we want to see the international enrollment go to, just to have a more diverse, inclusive, vibrant, exciting university community. And we kind of hit bottom about 2007, 2008, and our enrollment hadn't yet really taken off on its growth spurt, where it was like 4.6 percent of our student population were international students. And we had talked about getting that to ten percent, now we're talking about by 2017, '18, getting it to fifteen percent. It's now about eleven percent. And it really was the INTO partnership that made that possible. And the two people who made it possible were Sabah Randhawa, our provost, and Mark McCambridge, our CFO who passed away a couple of years ago. They both were excited, they looked around about, you know, how are we going to get our international enrollment up?

And we were the first U.S. partner of INTO. It now has a number of partners around the country where they work with the university to bring students from abroad in, and it's an interesting concept. I mean, they have the network for bringing students here, but the idea is they have a pathways program. The students come, they study for a year, maybe they need to improve their English, maybe they have some remedial work they need to do, and then they apply to colleges and universities and then go wherever they want to go. But the simple sense of it was, if that pathway program is on your campus and those students are well received and feel comfortable, they're going to apply to your university. And if the admission standards are exactly what they would be for everyone else, you are going to accept the ones who you are confident have the capacity to succeed through to graduation. And that's what happened. I mean, I think the expectation was at least two-thirds of the students in any one year are going to come to the university where they've done this pathways program. I think our figures have probably been closer to eighty to eighty-five percent, if not more, who come to Oregon State University.

Part of the reason why we've been as successful as we are is, obviously this is an interesting and good concept. Mark and Sabah have done a good job partnering with our INTO colleagues, but probably the sort of special sauce that really made it click was our own international students. They're wonderful. I've never seen anything like this. When I was at Ohio State, we had about thirty-five hundred international students, and the biggest concern was loneliness, depression and suicide among international students. They would cluster among themselves; the South Korean students would get together, the Chinese students, the Indian students, they'd have activities, try to sort of build, replicate their own small communities, but the university really didn't do very much to make them feel like this is your home, too.

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I came here and I could not believe it. The international students of OSU, from day one when I got here, are always doing activities. They're always helping each other out, they're always having celebrations and festivals. We have Japan Night, we have Europe Night, we have China Night, we have India Night and they have food and dance and entertainment and they're wonderful. And the students through this—you know, we have the luau for the Pacific Islanders—the students put on these incredible programs every year. And students from one community will help students from another, whether it's serving the food at their event or whatever. And it was, wow, this is, what a wonderful difference this is.

So, that was something that was already in place, and as soon as the international students knew we were creating this capability to bring more international students, they reached out to them immediately. So, it wasn't just that we had this island of international students studying, and hopefully they'd interact enough with OSU that when they did apply to college they would want to come here; OSU was reaching out to them through our international students, making them

feel welcome, integrating them into activities on campus, introducing them to resources and opportunities that would be available to them, and basically engaging them from day one. And so, it was just a wonderful coming together of a number of capabilities that we're very, very proud of.

CP: Well, one of the pillars of OSU throughout its history has been what's now called OSU Statewide, as exemplified by Extension and the experiment stations. And I'm interested in knowing more about your connection to that work and how it has evolved.

ER: So, let me give you my sense of my first reaction when I came here. Obviously as chair of Economics I actually worked closely with some colleagues in Ag. Econ at Ohio State, more so than most people. I sat on some of their doctoral exam committees and so forth. So, I knew a lot of people in the College of Agriculture there. They have an Extension Service just like every state— experiment station. There it's in one place, in Wooster. And Keith Smith, who's now stepping down as the head of Extension there, genuinely worried at the beginning of this century; what does it mean to be a twenty-first century land grant? People in Ohio, it's very urban, a lot of medium-sized cities, and people don't think about the rural communities there a lot, although they have a number of rural communities who could benefit from a little more consideration. They're very urban, and he worried about well, what's the twenty-first century of a land grant university?

Well, quick flash-forward, I come here and I would say literally within the first weeks I was here I would be meeting people like at the Pendleton Round-Up, and we'll be going there in a couple of weeks, and people would say "I'm a fifth generation Beaver." And I didn't have to talk to people about land grant; they understood land grant. So, maybe it's that we're in the western U.S., these are younger states, whatever; we're not as urban as a state like Ohio, but it's palpable here. People understand. When you say "we're a land grant university," people not only know generally what that means, they think that's really good and something to be proud of.

So, when I came here I was really struck at the sense of no, what's the issue—I mean land grant means that we were created in 1868 under the land grant legislation signed by President Lincoln. President Lincoln talked about the land grants as the people's colleges. And the idea was these were public institutions who would get grants of land; they could use the grant to either get money to build a college wherever they wanted or they could use the land to build on. Our original land was in Klamath Basin, and somebody got a vial of Klamath Basin land recently, I think Ron Adams when he was at his retirement reception. So, somebody knows where to dig it up. But that idea that we were created to educate those who come from middle class and ordinary circumstances and to really help spur economic development and social progress in the areas where we were located.

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Now our influence is national and around the world, but that was job one. Well, it's still job one. Our job is to help Oregonians get the kind of education—I talk about our students, I say that our graduates are the most important contribution we make to the future, that we expect them to be prepared to compete with anyone, anywhere, anytime, but when service is needed, they serve. And so, we try to create and sustain a culture here where students understand you're privileged to have this opportunity, you're going to be able to go up against the best because of the education you're going to get here, but you have an obligation to others, because it was other's obligation to you that even made it possible for you to get this education.

So, it's very palpable what it means to us to be land grant. Another example of it is, you know, words like excellence get tossed around a lot. You know, "we're going to be excellent, we're going to have top quality programs," and it's like, well, so what is that about? Is that bragging rights? Is that rankings? What do you mean when you say you have a drive for excellence? And I tell people we understand that the more exceptional we are at everything we do, the more powerful and positive impact we can have on the lives of those we serve. It's always about other, it's not about yourself. It's not about puffing yourself up; it's about what you're going to be able to accomplish because of the quality of education, because of the talents that you've been able to hone.

So, I come here and find that there is that culture that's very alive and vibrant. One of the things that struck me right away was, for example, the 4-H program. 4-H program in 1994 had about forty-four thousand youngsters who were in it. Well, then it turns out in 2004 or '05 it's a hundred and forty-four thousand. So, I think 4-H is not growing nationally, certainly,

and in most places probably is in substantial decline, but here it's actually growing. So, the stewards of those programs also have been very forward-looking in connecting with the young people and communities and so forth, to the extent that through some difficult financial times, Extension has gone to local communities and asked them to vote taxes on themselves to help sustain the Extension programs. And Scott Reed can give you the answer, I think we're now at about twenty-four of the thirty-six counties that are actually taxing themselves to help support the Extension and experiment station programs.

The other thing that I really like about our programs, and this includes the forest research lab, but also the experiment stations, is that we don't have applied support one place and research is off isolated somewhere else. In Ohio there is an experiment research station, it's a place called Wooster, which is probably about forty miles outside of Columbus, Ohio, and Columbus is right in the center of the state, so it's not too far from the center. But all of the agricultural experimental work goes on there in that research site. Well, I came here and we have something like fifteen ag. experiment station sites in the state, and they're all affiliated with Extension offices. And I ask people about that; well why is that? Would it be better to have it all in one place? And they said no, because the people who were in Extension talk to people, engage with them, find out what their issues are and bring it back to the researchers, and the researchers work on those issues. And the researchers share what they're learning with the folks in Extension so the folks in Extension are learning directly from the research and they can bring it back to the community. So, our people feel we got the right model. This is - maybe we stumbled on it, maybe somebody was smart enough to decide explicitly, at some point, this is how it should be. But it seems to work really well.

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One of the challenges we have that I think probably most people don't appreciate is we are the second-most diverse agricultural economy in America, after California. We have something like two hundred different commodity groups and areas that we need to work with. So it's hard, if you're hurting for resources, if you take from Area A for Area B, you're not just doing less in A, you just eliminated three commodities to help these commodities. So we're very pleased, for example, this last legislative session we got another fourteen million dollars for the statewide public services, so they can actually add to some of the activities they've been undertaking and hopefully improve upon their service to the communities that they're in. But it's just a wonderful story.

And as I say, there's this, you know, it's not like we've got, we're spending time worrying about what does it mean to be land grant? I mean, it drives who we are and how we look at the world. I used to tell people years ago, Dave Frohnmayer was president at U of O and I just thought the world of him. We were really good friends. He passed away last winter. But people would say, well, how is OSU different from U of O? And sometimes people are trying to get you to take shots at each other, but what I would say - and I actually believe it and I don't mean it with any disrespect - that I thought, when Dave got up in the morning, what he would think about is "how can I make the University of Oregon an even more exceptional university than it is?" And when I get up in the morning, I think about "what should we be doing for the people we serve in Oregon and beyond that we're not doing well enough? What do we need to work on?" So again, it's just that is in our DNA; economic development, social progress, making a difference in people's lives.

I was at this summit on the coast in Newport just the last couple of days, and so I was asked the question about commercialization, how do people contact the university? I said "most places it is kind of a black hole, people don't know how do I make contact with the university." I said "you know what, we have this guy, Brian Wall, who is the assistant vice president for research, commercialization and industrial policy at Oregon State University, and his phone number is 541-737-9058." And I repeated it and I said, "I'm told Brian is sitting by the phone waiting for your call," which obviously got a chuckle. But, I mean, maybe that's being a little silly, but we're very approachable, and in fact very anxious to be helpful to people. That's who we are.

CP: A couple questions about colleagues. First of all, I'm interested in the work and the impact that Sabah Randhawa has made as provost here at OSU.

ER: He's—Sabah, I think, has made a tremendous contribution. I think among the most visible things that people would be aware of, certainly, is the INTO program, bringing people in there, but also all the nuts and bolts of working with colleagues to establish the plans for the marine studies campus, working with Becky and colleagues there day in and day out; what are all the next steps we need to take to insure the success of Bend and the Cascades campus. He and Mark

McCambridge, when Mark was alive, were just a great team. They worked very closely with each other. And unlike a lot of CFOs, Mark understood that the finances are about the academic mission. It's not about having a nice-looking balance sheet. And so he was just, I think, a tremendous help to Sabah. And you can talk to Sabah about that in terms of making things work, but day in, day out, Sabah is quiet, focused, holds people accountable, looks for results.

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He and I have worked together now for eleven years, he's been provost at the university. He was interim provost for a little bit before he took the full time regular position. And I think that's helped everybody, that sort of he and I worked together incredibly well. I'm not sure he's less passionate than I am, but I think I wear my passion on my sleeve, probably to my own detriment. I was telling someone the other day - because, I mean, you always like to be able to joke around or whatnot - but I thought the only people who always take me seriously are my enemies, including when I say something in jest that gets misinterpreted. So, passion is good, but being outspoken and passionate is not what the moment always calls for. So, I think he and I have been a good team. When things sort of quietly need to get done, need to be followed up on, he and I can talk about them. I don't think there's a single major issue we've disagreed on. I think he tends to be circumspect and deliberate and maybe a little slower than he needs to be to get things done. I think I need—I tend to be passionate and impulsive and maybe a little too quick in demanding when things should get done, and I think when we get together and you stir it, you get something that actually works pretty well. He's serious and deliberate and moves at a quick and efficient pace, and there's an element of passion and vision attached to it. And that resonates with other people.

So, I think we complement each other really well. But yeah, he's been a tremendous contributor to everything major that's gone on here. And I've told him, and I've said this to the deans themselves, that this is the best leadership group among the deans that I've seen in the time I've been here, certainly stronger than the group that—any of the rotations of groups that I worked with at Ohio State. Many of them are—at least several of the deans that I worked with there went on to be presidents of universities and heads of systems and so forth and so on. This group that we have now is just terrific. That makes—people make all the difference.

CP: And a relatively new set of colleagues, the Board of Trustees. Can you give us some background on how that came about and how it's been going?

ER: Well, you may know I was the one guy who said "for God's sake, don't do this." I had eleven years working with the Board of Trustees at Ohio State. They've since changed the way they operated, but when I was there—and it had been in place for many years—they would appoint one new trustee each year, for nine years. So, there were nine appointed members of the Board of Trustees from around—and they were all from Ohio, so from around the state, and there were two student trustees. They had staggered two-year terms, and an undergraduate student and graduate student. The students were always wonderful.

That was the constant: the students were wonderful, the adults not so wonderful, the outside people. And part of the reason was—and there's an organization called AGB, the Association of Governing Boards, that has very nice offices in Washington, D.C. and is doing very well, thank you, because there's a lot of business out there for boards that are being dysfunctional or need to be educated about what to do and what not to do. And I saw all that at Ohio State. I had one board chair who said it was the only position he'd risen to leadership—because in their ninth year they become the chair of the board. So, you're on it for eight years and then your ninth year, your last year, you get to chair the board for one year. So, every board chair has been waiting eight years to do whatever he or she thinks needs to be done, and so the ship kind of bounces off the shorelines as it moves down the river. And he said it was the only position that one could rise to leadership by virtue of longevity, regardless of your level of competence. And there were some whose competence it was worth questioning. And they were all appointed by the governor, so if you had a governor who was a Democrat for eight years, which we did, Dick Celeste, you had eight Democrats who got appointed to this. And often they're the people who give you the most money for your campaign.

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Then we get George Voinovich, who I also loved, who was a Republican, and then you get eight Republicans in a row until somebody else gets elected. It's a crazy way to do business. So, I saw it warts and all, and they had the habit of—by the time I got in central administration, they were meeting once a month. So, they would meet ten times a year, and it was

an incredible theatrical production. I mean, you're constantly getting ready for a board meeting, having the board meeting, decompressing after the board meeting, figuring out what everybody's got to do, getting ready for the next board meeting, you had people on the board who were dipping down into the university, promoting this thing or that thing, or angry about this and that and demanding answers from people. The care and feeding was incredible.

So, I had a lot of reason not to think this was a great idea. We had the OUS board, they're all good people, they were not terribly directive, we were held somewhat accountable, not terribly, but somewhat accountable, and I had a pretty good idea what we needed to do. So, this worked really well for me. So, when we started talking about having a board, I was pretty clear of all the things that can go wrong. We started off right, we'll see how it looks twenty years from now. But when it was clear boards were going to be created, I let the governor's office know well, if U of O are going to have a board, I sure want a board, I don't want to be stuck with me and four regional universities and I've got to fight them to get resources. So, I want a board like the others. So, that was more strategic than anything else.

But then a lot of positive things happened. One was that the governor asked us for names, and I thought well—and I didn't have very much time—and I think I must have called nineteen people about "would you be willing to serve on the board?" Fourteen of them said yes immediately, and they're all these amazing people. Many of them are on the board now. Well, that was like two days. I called all these people and fourteen of them said yes. Because I only had about two weeks, they gave me two weeks' notice to come up with names. Well, then, before the decisions were made, the governor actually called me and he said "well, I got your list"—I thought well, I better give him nineteen or twenty, because it's kind of presumptuous if he's going to appoint eleven, for me to send him eleven names. So, I sent him about nineteen or twenty, he called me up and he said "which ones do you want? Pick." And I did, and he appointed them.

And it included Elson Floyd, who just passed away, the president of Washington State University. I don't know, you could check, but is there any Board of Trustees in America that has a sitting president of another comparable university serving on the board? Elson agreed to serve. A number of just extraordinary people; all of them on the board are great. What I feel really good about is, you know, there's always—talk is cheap, about equity and inclusion. We have a board, apart from me, that consists of seven men and seven women and the chair of the board is a woman, and that's deliberate, because people look and see what is, as opposed to what you say. And that certainly wasn't the case at Ohio State. There were maybe one or two women out of the nine, or maybe one of the student trustees was a woman, but there was no concerted effort to make sure there was balance. This is a great group.

So, once I got past "we're going to have a board," I actually started thinking about, well, if we get this right, what does it mean to get it right? Forget, you know, you had an experience; the world isn't all like that. A lot of it's like that, that's why AGB does so well, but it doesn't have to be like that. What would it mean to get it right? And it occurred to me I'd had—I don't know if you've heard of Jim Collins' *Built to Last, Good to Great*, he's written some books about leadership and so forth, pretty well known. I'd gotten to know him back in the late nineties and I actually, I heard him give a talk at the, I think it was the American Council on Education meetings, the annual meeting in D.C. four or five years ago, and I called him up and I said "you know, I'm really worried about this issue of transition. I'm not going to be there forever, we have a five year plan, we refresh it every five years, but how do you sustain a drive toward what you feel is the appropriate mission of the university?"

And part of what we talked about is what is happening here; you get a really good leadership team so if somebody comes in when I'm gone and it's not a good match, they won't stay, or they'll get a hell of a lot better fast, because people here won't put up with it. So, you get a strong leadership team, you build a culture that's resilient about pursuing your core mission, and then people have to meet you where you are, and they add their own vision and imagination, but they don't steer the ship in a totally different direction.

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So, that was good because we still had OUS. So, I'm looking for where's the link to twenty years from now? I'm gone, Sabah's gone, how does this whole culture stay on course? A lot of people are depending on it. And then I realized that one of the things, if you think about the Board of Trustees, it is a perpetuity, because they have staggered terms here, it's they can serve, now that it's been put in place, every two years, half of them are going to be replaced and they each can serve a four-year term and then a second four-year term, if they're nominated again. But it's always, it's changing and it's linked to the past, it's never completely *de novo*, but it never totally lapses. So, there is this continuous thread

that's reflected in the Board of Trustees. And what I've said to our board is "you're the keepers of the mission. You are the keepers of the mission to make sure we stay true to who we are, what we say our values are and what we declare we're trying to achieve. That is your most important role, that and fiduciary responsibility are the two most important things I think you need to focus on."

Well, so I knew about the experience at Ohio State, I knew about AGB, I got to talk to Rick Legon, who's the executive director of AGB, so I contacted him, because I knew we were going to have a board, and we had somebody they recommended come in and work with the board. Before the board even went live, they were appointed, I think, in November of '13, and so in January, and then I think again in March or something, we had somebody recommended by AGB who came in and talked to all of us for a couple of days about, here's the appropriate role of trustees, of president and management. Here's where you ought to be devoting your attention, it's just a very good sort of orientation for all of us. And now we've developed a process to do orientation for—Preston Pulliams is joining the board—to get people oriented toward their task as members of the board. And I think that got us off to a good start.

Meg Reeves was still here as general counsel, we made her the first secretary of the board. She worked very closely with OUS and with others, with AGB on policies and procedures for a university with its own Board of Trustees. So, a lot of the sort of process, everything we did is precedent-setting. For eighty years we didn't have our own board, so now we're reinventing what the board does, what the rules and regulations are. Well, one of the things that I think serves us very well is they meet four times a year, not ten times, although we have lots of committee meetings, individual committee meetings outside of the full board meetings. That encourages them not to get too entangled in the day-to-day activities of the board. So, we're sort of feeling our way around, but this is just a great group. And they're all, you know, they're good people, and I didn't ask them to serve because I thought they were going to give us a lot of money or because I thought they were friends with the governor. I mean, these are people that I asked because I thought these are people I want to listen to.

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And then the faculty picked Brenda McComb, the dean of the Graduate School, who is excellent, as the faculty representative. SEIU picked Mark Baldwin to be the SEIU representative. He does IT, very bright, very articulate, he's been terrific. Taylor Sarman was the president of ASOSU after he got appointed to the board, he's terrific. We're going to get a new student member in the next weeks or months, and I know both of the candidates, they're terrific students. The students had to come up with a process for how do we select a student to serve on the board, they've done that. So, a lot of things are being done for the first, or at best, the second time. There's a lot of learning going on.

I talked to Governor Kitzhaber after it was clear the boards were going to be created about, not my concern about him or his successors, I said "I'm really thinking about three or four governors from now, two or three presidents of the university from now; how do we keep this process from becoming politicized? Everybody's heard the stories out of places like Wisconsin, Florida, Texas, pick your favorite example, of the education system and boards getting caught up in politics, and how do we avoid that?" And I had indicated to the governor that one possibility would be to have some kind of blue ribbon, statewide commission that could vet candidates. People could nominate people and they could vet them, and then maybe for any one appointment they would send the governor two or three names, like all these people are perfectly qualified, pick who you want. And he looked at me like I was the dumbest person he'd ever met, and I understand why, because this is an opportunity to favor someone who's been very supportive of you politically; why would you want to surrender that to a blue ribbon commission? So, as wonderful as the idea sounds, I doubt there are any states that have blue ribbon commissions telling the governor who's acceptable for appointment. But hopefully we're just not going to get caught up in politics. But it's worth worrying about.

CP: Well, as we start to wind up a little bit, I have a question about the more human side of being a university president. You, in a past interview that we did, you mentioned when you were provost you didn't fully realize what it meant to be twenty-four seven. You've been—

ER: Yeah, I told Brit Kirwan that—he asked me if I thought I was ready for it when I started hearing from people and I thought "you dope, I'm running this damn university, do I think I could be president?"

CP: Yeah.

ER: And I really had no, I mean I wasn't exactly loafing. I mean, I think I was working seventy hour, eighty hour weeks. I used to tell people that my favorite thing about daylight savings time was that I could home at eight o'clock at night and it was still light out. So, it was a certain lack of imagination there. But I worked very, very hard. But still, I got to go home most nights, and weekends I could get work done and be home with the kids and family and stuff. It's totally different. It is twenty-four seven, especially now. I mean, this next week will be the beginning of not exactly a blur - there'll be clear skies from time to time - but just a very intense next nine or ten months. So, I tell people when you're looking for someone, when you're looking for qualities in presidential candidates, one of the things that's least appreciated is energy and stamina. And if you can't go like the Energizer Bunny, at least every so often, you're never going to survive.

So, we have a situation, let me give you a good example, I looked at my calendar that's coming up, on the day of the—so, we go to Pendleton for the Pendleton Round-Up, I go there the Thursday morning, there's a Let'er Buck breakfast, we go to that, we meet with the editorial board of the *East Oregonian*, we have lunch with folks at Blue Mountain Community College, local folks, we'll probably have something scheduled for the afternoon, we have dinner with folks—well Thursday night, the night before we get there to have dinner with folks. Thursday night we go Hamley's and we have our alumni dinner celebration. The next morning we're up for the cowboy breakfast at seven, then we do the radio program at eight, then the parade starts at ten, you ride your horse through the parade, you go to the lunch after, the VIP lunch, and then you go to the rodeo and you give the best-dressed Indian the blanket and then you go to dinner that night. Well, this year I'm going to have to leave probably right after the lunch, if not miss the lunch, because I have to get back to Portland from Pendleton, because I have to be at a black-tie dinner that night, Friday night. The next day we have a home football game. Okay, we can do this, this'll work.

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CP: What is game day like for you?

ER: It's always great. I mean, one of the things I actually miss is we've sort of got it down to a system now where we start with a pre-game meal, it might be brunch, lunch, dinner, depending when the game is, but we always have a group that comes to be with us in the suite for the game. We always have a reception meal at the alumni center, and it starts two hours before the game, and we're there and I talk to people there and then I rush over to the Valley end zone and I predict the score and get people there fired up and then I go back to the suite and then I go to the other side of the stadium and visit people in the suites there, and then I go back to the first side of the stadium where our suite is, and I visit with people there and I go down the hall and meet with people in the—so, it's a lot of sort of meeting and greeting stuff and then sometimes there's something down on the field; homecoming, where we're giving out, you know, recognizing the University Day award winners.

And then if it's something like the September 4th game or the Stanford game where the game is later, then they'll start backfilling my day so that I meet with this group, that group, the other group, because they're all here, whether it's the Alumni Board or the Foundation Board is having a meeting in conjunction with the home football game. I think the Stanford game I'm meeting with the Beef Commission folks. I mean it's just lots of different groups. So again, it's pretty long and intense. But it's good. I mean, if you don't like people, this is not a line of work to be in. I mean, you basically have to fundamentally like people and like being with people, which I do. So, it doesn't feel so much like work. I mean, it just feels like I'm very busy, which, a little slower pace might be nice, but you're with good people, having a good time.

CP: So is that where your energy comes from, and your source of renewal, is just through this enjoyment of being around people? Or is there something else that you do to help deal with the stress?

ER: No, I mean you don't have a billion dollar campaign just because you like to be around people. You don't build a campus in Newport or Bend just because you like to be around people. You have some pretty definitive ideas about what can be done and how it should be done and the impact it can have on people's lives. So at some level, to deal with the intensity of it all, again, you need to be who you are and comfortable in your own skin. You haven't got time to show different facets of your personality to different people. You are who you are. Some are going to like it, some are going to hate it. You have to enjoy being with people because you are with people all the time. But it's not just about a continuous party, it's about there are very clear-cut things you and others together are trying to accomplish that you are very intent on accomplishing and focused on, so that even with all this stuff going around you, you don't lose sight of what it is you're trying to get done, and make sure that the steps that need to be taken to get there get taken.

CP: Well, my last question for you is about the future. You're fond of saying "the best is yet to come," and given all that we've seen in the last decade, all the change and the transformation and the growth, what might that look like for OSU?

ER: Well, I think, you know, we've talked a little bit about some of it. Obviously to see the university emerge in Bend is going to be pretty tremendous. I mean, there aren't too many places in America, I don't imagine, that are creating four-year campuses. So, we're kind of an outlier in that sense. The marine studies and marine sciences initiative strikes me as so much in concert with who we are and how we think of ourselves that I just think that's going to be spectacular, because we think we're very collaborative and we think we're good at breaking down barriers and working across disciplines. This will give us an opportunity to do something that can't be repeated anywhere else in the country. I mean, this will be unique and distinctive.

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So, I'm very excited about that, but frankly, I think as an institution—and I'll talk about this in my senate speech in October—we have to eliminate achievement gaps for different groups of students at the undergraduate level. We need to raise the graduation rates for all groups of students, and we need to continue to build a more equitable and inclusive community here so that we become even more diverse, not just domestically, internationally, but the mix of faculty, staff and students who are here, than we are now. But probably the—one of the areas where we really have made very minimal progress—we've made some, so we set records but it's not impressive—is in closing those achievement gaps and raising everybody to a much higher, common six-year graduation rate.

So, I was telling someone the other day, that's—when I was asked would I serve for five more years - and maybe I will, maybe I won't, I mean none of us has control over our health and other things that can intervene. I mean, part of what compelled me to even consider it is that's unfinished business, and it's really important that we move those dials in ways that we never have. That's the next big change in the profile for Oregon State University, beyond the obvious, the campuses and what they represent, that's the next big difference we need to make. It's not about structures; it's about people and it's about their success and the impact that we can have on it. So, I mean that has me pretty damn fired up, that I want to see us demonstrably making progress on that before I step away. And then I'll feel like it wasn't about how many buildings we could build—the campaign's over, why don't you leave—no, there's very important unfinished business and we need to really focus on that.

We're part of this—I may have mentioned it before—the University Innovation Alliance. This is a collaboration of eleven major public research universities. So, it's Riverside and us and Arizona State University and Kansas and Iowa State and Purdue and Michigan State and Texas at Austin and Ohio State and Central Florida and Georgia State, it's just a very, very good group of institutions, and we're all collaborating with a common purpose, and that is to preserve and enhance the quality of the education we provide. But to actually graduate more students than we would have otherwise and to particularly focus on Pell eligible students, to deal with this divide between haves and have-nots—I don't know if I've shared the statistics with you, but if you come from a family with an annual income of ninety thousand or more, your chance of getting a college degree is one in two. If you come from a family with an annual income of thirty thousand or less, your chances are one in seventeen. And it's worse than it was forty years ago. That's what people are talking about in terms of the haves and the have-nots. Who is higher education for? We have to close that gap.

So, we're all collaborating on things that we're trying and learning work or don't work, to get us to better success rates or retention through to graduation for all students, but with a particular focus on Pell eligible students. This last year was the initial year of that partnership. So, I'm really excited to see what we're able to contribute to that, but also what we're able to learn from it over the next three or four years. And then whatever works, we'll share with everybody. I mean, this is not "life is a competition," it's not a competition. We all should care about young people and whether or not we're preparing the next generation to be as successful as possible. There are children, our grandchildren, our nieces and nephews, our friends, family, so there is a never-ending mission out there.

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So, for this next period of time, as we launch that, as we launch the four-year Cascades campuses, we launch the marine studies initiative—you know, we didn't even talk about the forest science complex. I mean, there's another whole spectacular front in which maybe we can bring jobs and new businesses to Oregon as this business with the cross-

laminated timbers for support structures for multi-story facilities. I mean, there's a lot I want to be around to see and do what I can to help make happen, that I think is really going to, really going to improve people's lives. So, what's not to be engaged in?

CP: Well President Ray, a busy man, I appreciate you carving out this time for us. This has been obviously a very valuable contribution to our project and I thank you very much.

ER: Good, good to talk to you.

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