Dear HECC Commissioners:

In 2013 the Legislature passed HB 2970, a bill sponsored by the House Higher Education Committee that calls for the creation of a new Associates Degree of Engineering. It was crafted to address Oregon’s need to increase the number of students receiving Bachelor’s and Graduate degrees in Engineering as part of its “STEM” initiative. Many students who consider majoring in Engineering wind up dropping out and switching to other majors for a variety of reasons. On the other hand, students who major in Engineering at community colleges and transfer successfully tend to stick with it and complete. However, transfer in engineering is among the most difficult, with different university programs having very different requirements. If we can make it easier for students to transfer from community college engineering programs directly into university engineering programs without their having to take additional courses, it will create more certainty and a higher degree of success.

The bill called on the HECC to develop an Associates of Science Oregon Transfer Degree (ASOT) in Engineering, similar to the existing one in Business (ASOT-Business). The bill anticipated that the HECC would use its convening authority to bring together a group of faculty and administrators from the colleges and universities to address this need and find consensus on the elements that would be included in such a degree.

I was so delighted to learn that Oregon’s Computer Science faculty have taken it upon themselves to tackle this problem directly. It’s a tribute to their long-standing practice of working cooperatively. I applaud their proactive, collaborative approach and see this as a very positive step in the direction of more seamless transfer from CC programs to university programs. I hope that at some point they will be able to take it even further, so that all impediments to students’ ability to move directly from one program to another (CC to university or university to university) will be effectively removed.

I hope you’ll join me in supporting this work.

Sincerely,

Michael E. Dembrow

Senator, Oregon SD23